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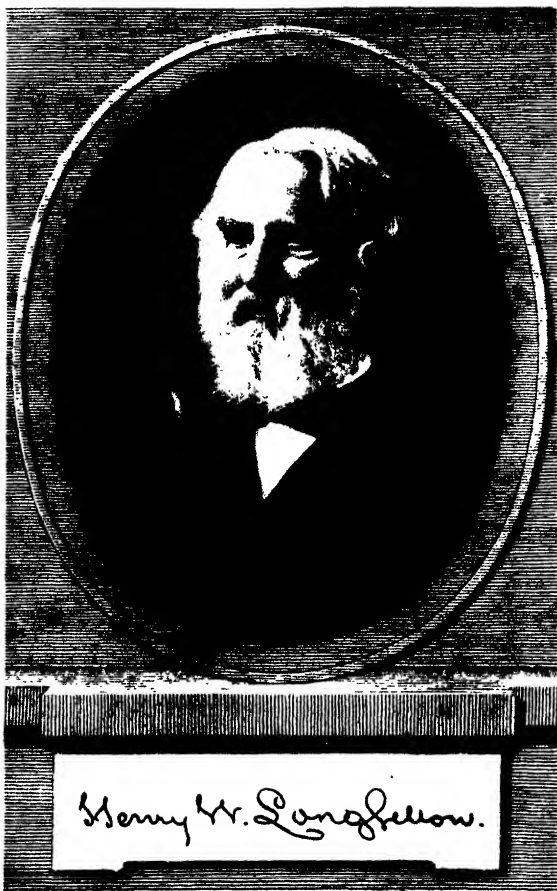




LITTLE MASTERPIECES OF  
ENGLISH POETRY











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**Little Masterpieces**  
In Forty-four Volumes

**P O E T R Y**

Edited by  
**HENRY VAN DYKE**



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**DESCRIPTIVE AND REFLECTIVE  
VERSE**



## INTRODUCTION

A GREAT many of the most interesting and, ultimately, the most valuable short poems in English literature show the poet in his function of prophet and seer. He looks out upon nature and his fellow-men and in upon his own soul, with its complex of aspiration and disappointment, and in all this bewildering circumstance he sees further than other men see; he teaches them how to meet the issues of life, or presents by his imagination, in Ruskin's phrase, "noble grounds for noble emotions." In this conception the poet is an interpreter, actuated not only by emotion and the gift of expression but by insight and wisdom. No other function of the poet is more universally recognized. Poet and prophet were the same with the Hebrews, and no men now are more truly infidels than those who deny the wisdom of the poets. The key to the composition of this volume is that these poems are interpretative. They are various in aspect and in temper; but in all of them the poet is making his "perpetual endeavor to express the spirit of things." The poetry, here, is not the spontaneous outburst of the poet's heart; it softens that, and adds to it a

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

remoter charm bestowed by contemplation. This is perhaps the very noblest function of the lyric poet, that he shall thus translate into thought the emotions of his heart.

Most of the poems here are lyrics and consequently freely varying in form. A few of the character pieces have a strong dramatic quality and some reflective verse is but poorly covered by the term lyric at the best. It is interesting to see the larger proportion, as compared with the volume of pure lyrics, of blank verse and of other linked and continued measures. As the emotional element of the verse becomes less intense, the melody becomes gentler and less obtrusive,—in other words, form and content are not to be divorced.

The first section of the volume contains poems which interpret nature, the "breath and finer spirit" of things seen and heard. Contemplative geniuses, like Wordsworth, offer the typical poems. That dictum of his, finely descriptive of his own method, but not, as he supposed, of the universal mood of poetic creation, shows the prevailing temper of the descriptive poems in this volume. "Poetry," he says, "is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, taking its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity." This translation of the heart of nature, this application of its sights and sounds to our situation in the world, is characteristic of all great nature poets. Burns sees his own fate in the daisy perishing beneath his plow. Lanier glories in Sun and Sunrise with

## Introduction

a feeling intense and personal. The slow-moving reverent fidelity of Wordsworth shows us that he is trying to express what nature has actually wrought upon his emotions. The descriptive method of their poems is not enumerative or topographical. By virtue of the transformation in the mind of the poet they are more strictly selective and suggestive than other poetry. The image comes back robbed of inessential features and endowed with its true significance.

The remarks just made about descriptive lyrics apply also to the second section of this volume. It is made up of a group of portraits of people. Human figures are there described in a manner analogous to that of the nature pieces mentioned above. They are not individualized but contemplated and interpreted. With Wordsworth, in *The Solitary Reaper* and *Stepping Westward*, for example, the figures seem to lose personality and become merely features of the landscape. In Longfellow and Whittier the figures often represent trades and classes. Other poems like *The Lotos-Eaters*, *The Men of Old*, and *Robin Hood* are finely romantic. Others, like Hood's *Ruth*, are idyllic. A few, like *On a Bust of Dante*, *Memorabilia*, and several poems addressed to poets and people, are personal lyrics inspired by the contemplation of other men.

The third section of the volume presents considerable contrast in temper to the first two. It is made up of character pieces of the less dramatic sort, those in which action and situation

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

are not so important as to make the dramatic element overpowering. They are, for the most part, reflective poems uttered from the point of view of another person, and therefore doubly illuminative. The dramatic element is perhaps very small in a poem like *Locksley Hall*; but, according to Tennyson's own statement to the editor of these volumes, he was not speaking for himself, but had assumed in the poem the point of view of the open-eyed and sanguine, albeit disappointed and rather cynical, young man who speaks the lines. In other poems, like *Ulysses*, the dramatic element is much greater, but none of them is, properly speaking, a dramatic monologue. They are too far removed from the conventionality of the drama.

The final section of the volume is taken up with reflective verse. The elegies and hymns are in another volume, so also are the odes. A good deal of the more obviously reflective verse is therefore elsewhere provided for. There remains, however, a considerable quantity which deals with life's philosophy. The best of it comes from the last century; for just as it is the sort of verse to be expected from a period of wide-spread spiritual endeavor, so this lyrical century has been very exacting in its demands upon reflective verse. Almost none will be found here which is not highly emotionalized, and intensely personal in its nature.

HARDIN CRAIG.

THE INTERPRETATION OF  
NATURE



## L'ALLEGRO

HENCE, loathèd Melancholy,  
 Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born,  
 In Stygian cave forlorn,  
 'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and  
 sights unholy!  
 Find out some uncouth cell,  
 Where brooding Darkness spreads his  
 jealous wings,  
 And the night-raven sings;  
 There, under ebon shades and low-browed  
 rocks,  
 As ragged as thy locks,  
 In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell. 10  
 But come, thou Goddess fair and free,  
 In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,  
 And by men heart-easing Mirth;  
 Whom lovely Venus, at a birth,  
 With two sister Graces more,  
 To ivy-crownèd Bacchus bore:  
 Or whether (as some sager sing)  
 The frolic wind that breathes the spring,  
 Zephyr, with Aurora playing,  
 As he met her once a-Maying, 20

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

There, on beds of violets blue,  
And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,  
Filled her with thee, a daughter fair,  
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.

Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee  
Jest, and youthful Jollity,  
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,  
Nods and becks and wreathèd smiles  
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,  
And love to live in dimple sleek ; 30  
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,  
And Laughter holding both his sides.  
Come, and trip it, as you go,  
On the light fantastic toe ;  
And in thy right hand lead with thee  
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty ;  
And, if I give thee honour due,  
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,  
To live with her, and live with thee,  
In unrepovèd pleasures free ; 40  
To hear the lark begin his flight,  
And, singing, startle the dull night,  
From his watch-tower in the skies,  
Till the dappled dawn doth rise ;  
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,  
And at my window bid good-morrow,  
Through the sweet-briar or the vine,  
Or the twisted eglantine ;  
While the cock, with lively din,  
Scatters the rear of darkness thin ; 50  
And to the stack, or the barn-door,  
Stoutly struts his dames before :

## L'Allegro

Oft listening how the hounds and horn  
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,  
From the side of some hoar hill,  
Through the high wood echoing shrill:  
Sometime walking, not unseen,  
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,  
Right against the eastern gate,  
Where the great Sun begins his state, 60  
Robed in flames and amber light,  
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;  
While the ploughman, near at hand,  
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,  
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,  
And the mower whets his scythe,  
And every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,  
Whilst the landskip round it measures: 70  
Russet lawns, and fallows grey,  
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;  
Mountains on whose barren breast  
The labouring clouds do often rest;  
Meadows trim, with daisies pied;  
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide.  
Towers and battlements it sees  
Bosomed high in tufted trees,  
Where perhaps some beauty lies,  
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes. 80  
Hard by a cottage chimney smokes  
From betwixt two aged oaks,  
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met  
Are at their savoury dinner set

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Of herbs and other country messes,  
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;  
And then in haste her bower she leaves,  
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;  
Or, if the earlier season lead,  
To the tanned haycock in the mead. 99

Sometimes, with secure delight,  
The upland hamlets will invite,  
When the merry bells ring round,  
And the jocund rebecks sound  
To many a youth and many a maid  
Dancing in the chequered shade;  
And young and old come forth to play  
On a sunshine holiday,  
Till the livelong daylight fail:  
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale, 100  
With stories told of many a feat,  
How Faery Mab the junkets eat.  
She was pinched and pulled, she said;  
And he, by Friar's lanthorn led,  
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat  
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,  
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,  
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn  
That ten day-labourers could not end;  
Then lies him down, the lubbar fiend, 110  
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,  
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,  
And crop-full out of doors he flings,  
Ere the first cock his matin rings.  
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,  
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.

## L'Allegro

Towered cities please us then,  
And the busy hum of men,  
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,  
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold, 120  
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes  
Rain influence, and judge the prize  
Of wit or arms, while both contend  
To win her grace whom all commend.  
There let Hymen oft appear  
In saffron robe, with taper clear,  
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,  
With mask and antique pageantry ;  
Such sights as youthful poets dream  
On summer eves by haunted stream. 130  
Then to the well-trod stage anon,  
If Jonson's learned sock be on,  
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,  
Warble his native wood-notes wild.  
And ever, against eating cares,  
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,  
Married to immortal verse,  
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,  
In notes with many a winding bout  
Of linkèd sweetness long drawn out 140  
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,  
The melting voice through mazes running,  
Untwisting all the chains that tie  
The hidden soul of harmony :  
That Orpheus' self may heave his head  
From golden slumber on a bed  
Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear  
Such strains as would have won the ear

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Of Pluto to have quite set free  
His half-regained Eurydice. 150  
These delights if thou canst give,  
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

1632? 1645.

*John Milton.*

### II

## IL PENNEROSO

HENCE, vain deluding Joys.  
The brood of Folly without father bred!  
How little you bested,  
Or fill the fixèd mind with all your toys!  
Dwell in some idle brain,  
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes  
possess,  
As thick and numberless  
As the gay motes that people the sun-  
beams,  
Or likest hovering dreams,  
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train. 10  
But, hail! thou Goddess sage and holy!  
Hail, divinest Melancholy!  
Whose saintly visage is too bright  
To hit the sense of human sight,  
And therefore to our weaker view  
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;  
Black, but such as in esteem  
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,

## II Penseroso

Or that starred Ethiop Queen that strove  
To set her beauty's praise above 20  
The Sea-Nymphs, and their powers offended.  
Yet thou art higher far descended:  
Thee bright-haired Vesta long of yore  
To solitary Saturn bore;  
His daughter she; in Saturn's reign  
Such mixture was not held a stain.  
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades  
He met her, and in secret shades  
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,  
Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove. 30  
Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,  
Sober, steadfast, and demure,  
All in a robe of darkest grain,  
Flowing with majestic train, •  
And sable stole of cypress lawn  
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.  
Come; but keep thy wonted state,  
With éven step, and musing gait,  
And looks commercing with the skies,  
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes: 40  
There, held in holy passion still,  
Forget thyself to marble, till  
With a sad leaden downward cast  
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.  
And join with thee calm Peace and Quiet,  
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,  
And hears the Muses in a ring  
Aye round about Jove's altar sing;  
And add to these retirèd Leisure,  
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure; 50

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

But, first and chiefest, with thee bring  
Him that yon soars on golden wing,  
Guiding the fiery-wheelèd throne,  
The Cherub Contemplation;  
And the mute Silence hist along,  
'Less Philomel will deign a song,  
In her sweetest saddest plight,  
Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,  
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke  
Gently o'er the accustomed oak. 60  
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,  
Most musical, most melancholy!  
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among  
I woo, to hear thy even-song;  
And, missing thee, I walk unseen  
On the dry<sup>\*</sup> smooth-shaven green,  
To behold the wandering Moon,  
Riding near her highest noon,  
Like one that had been led astray  
Through the heaven's wide pathless way, 70  
And oft, as if her head she bowed,  
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.  
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,  
I hear the far-off curfew sound,  
Over some wide-watered shore,  
Swinging slow with sullen roar;  
Or, if the air will not permit,  
Some still removèd place will fit,  
Where glowing embers through the room  
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom, 80  
Far from all resort of mirth,  
Save the cricket on the hearth,

## Il Penseroso

Or the Bellman's drowsy charm  
To bless the doors from nightly harm.  
Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,  
Be seen in some high lonely tower,  
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,  
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere  
The spirit of Plato, to unfold  
What worlds or what vast regions hold 90  
The immortal mind that hath forsook  
Her mansion in this fleshly nook ;  
And of those Dæmons that are found  
In fire, air, flood, or underground,  
Whose power hath a true consent  
With planet or with element.  
Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy  
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,  
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,  
Or the tale of Troy divine, 100  
Or what (though rare) of later age  
Ennobled hath the buskined stage.  
But, O sad Virgin ! that thy power  
Might raise Musæus from his bower ;  
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing  
Such notes as, warbled to the string,  
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,  
And made Hell grant what Love did seek ;  
Or call up him that left half-told  
The story of Cambuscan bold, 110  
Of Camball, and of Algarsife.  
And who had Canace to wife,  
That owned the virtuous ring and glass,  
And of the wondrous horse of brass

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

On which the Tartar King did ride ;  
And if aught else great Bards beside  
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,  
Of turneys, and of trophies hung,  
Of forests, and enchantments drear,  
Where more is meant than meets the ear. 121  
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,  
Till civil-suited Morn appear,  
Not tricked and frownced, as she was wont  
With the Attic boy to hunt,  
But kerchieft in a comely cloud,  
While rocking winds are piping loud,  
Or ushered with a shower still,  
When the gust hath blown his fill,  
Ending on the rustling leaves,  
With minuscule-drops from off the eaves. 132  
And, when the sun begins to fling  
His flaming beams, me, Goddess, bring  
To archèd walks of twilight groves,  
And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,  
Of pine, or monumental oak,  
Where the rude axe with heavèd stroke  
Was never heard the Nymphs to daunt,  
Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.  
There, in close covert, by some brook,  
Where no profaner eye may look, 140  
Hide me from Day's garish eye.  
While the bee with honeyed thigh,  
That at her flowery work doth sing,  
And the waters murmuring,  
With such consort as they keep,  
Entice the dewy-feathered Sleep.

## II Penseroso

And let some strange mysterious dream  
Wave at his wings, in airy stream  
Of lively portraiture displayed,  
Softly on my eyelids laid. 150  
And, as I wake, sweet music breathe  
Above, about, or underneath,  
Sent by some Spirit to mortals good,  
Or the unseen Genius of the wood.  
But let my due feet never fail  
To walk the studious cloister's pale,  
And love the high embowèd roof,  
With antique pillars massy proof,  
And storied windows richly dight,  
Casting a dim religious light. 160  
There let the pealing organ blow,  
To the full-voiced quire below,  
In service high and anthems clear,  
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,  
Dissolve me into ecstasies.  
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.  
And may at last my weary age  
Find out the peaceful hermitage,  
The hairy gown and mossy cell,  
Where I may sit and rightly spell, 170  
Of every star that heaven doth shew,  
And every herb that sips the dew,  
Till old experience do attain  
To something like prophetic strain.  
These pleasures, Melancholy, give.  
And I with thee will choose to live.

1632? 1645.

*John Milton.*

## THE GARDEN

How vainly men themselves amaze,  
To win the palm, the oak, or bays;  
And their incessant labours see  
Crown'd from some single herb or tree,  
Whose short and narrow-vergéd shade  
Does prudently their toils upbraid;  
While all the flowers and trees do close,  
To weave the garlands of Repose. 8

Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,  
And Innocence thy sister dear?  
Mistaken long, I sought you then  
In busy companies of men.  
Your sacred plants, if here below,  
Only among the plants will grow;  
Society is all but rude  
To this delicious solitude. 16

No white nor red was ever seen  
So amorous as this lovely green.  
Fond lovers, cruel as their flame,  
Cut in these trees their mistress' name:  
Little, alas, they know or heed  
How far these beauties hers exceed!  
Fair trees! wheres'e'er your bark I wound,  
No name shall but your own be found. 24

## The Garden

When we have run our passion's heat,  
Love hither makes his best retreat.  
The gods, that mortal beauty chase,  
Still in a tree did end their race;  
Apollo hunted Daphne so  
Only that she might laurel grow;  
And Pan did after Syrinx speed  
Not as a nymph, but for a reed. 32

What wondrous life is this I lead!  
Ripe apples drop about my head;  
The luscious clusters of the vine  
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;  
The nectarine and curious peach  
Into my hands themselves do reach;  
Stumbling on melons, as I pass,  
Insnared with flowers, I fall on grass. 40

Meanwhile the mind from pleasure less  
Withdraws into its happiness;  
The mind, that ocean where each kind  
Does straight its own resemblance find;  
Yet it creates, transcending these,  
Far other worlds, and other seas,  
Annihilating all that 's made  
To a green thought in a green shade. 48

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,  
Or at some fruit-tree's mossy root,  
Casting the body's vest aside,  
My soul into the boughs does glide;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

There, like a bird, it sits and sings,  
Then whets and combs its silver wings,  
And, till prepared for longer flight,  
Waves in its plumes the various light. 56

Such was that happy garden-state  
While man there walk'd without a mate:  
After a place so pure and sweet,  
What other help could yet be meet!  
But 't was beyond a mortal's share  
To wander solitary there:  
Two paradises 't were in one,  
To live in paradise alone. 64

How well the skilful gardener drew  
Of flowers and herbs this dial new!  
Where, from above, the milder sun  
Does through a fragrant zodiac run,  
And, as it works, the industrious bee  
Computes its time as well as we.  
How could such sweet and wholesome  
hours  
Be reckon'd, but with herbs and flowers? 72

1681.

*Andrew Marvell.*

## FROST AT MIDNIGHT

THE Frost performs its secret ministry,  
Unhelped by any wind. The owl's cry  
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.  
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,

## Frost at Midnight

Have left me to that solitude, which suits  
Abstruser musings: save that at my side  
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.  
'T is calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs  
And vexes meditation with its strange  
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood, 10  
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,  
With all the numberless goings-on of life,  
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame  
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;  
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,  
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.  
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature  
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,  
Making it a companionable form,  
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit 20  
By its own moods interprets, everywhere  
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,  
And makes a toy of Thought.

But O! how oft,  
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,  
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,  
To watch that fluttering *stranger*! and as oft  
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt  
Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-  
tower,  
Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang 30  
From morn to evening, all the hot Fairday,  
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me  
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear  
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt,  
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my  
dreams!

And so I brooded all the following morn,  
Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye  
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book :  
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched 40  
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,  
For still I hoped to see the *stranger's* face,  
Townsmen, or aunt, or sister more beloved,  
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike!

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,  
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,  
Fill up the interspersed vacancies  
And momentary pauses of the thought!  
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart  
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee. 50  
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,  
And in far other scenes! For I was reared  
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,  
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.  
But *thou*, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze  
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags  
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,  
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores  
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear  
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible 60  
Of that eternal language, which thy God  
Utters, who from eternity doth teach  
Himself in all, and all things in himself.  
Great universal Teacher! he shall mould  
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

## Sunrise

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,  
Whether the summer clothe the general earth  
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing  
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch  
Of mossy apple-tree, while the night thatch 70  
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops  
fall

Heard only in the trances of the blast,  
Or if the secret ministry of frost  
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,  
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

1798.

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge.*

## SUNRISE

IN my sleep I was fain of their fellowship, fain  
Of the live-oak, the marsh, and the main.  
The little green leaves would not let me alone  
in my sleep;  
Up-breathed from the marshes, a message of  
range and of sweep,  
Interwoven with wafters of wild sea-liberties,  
drifting,  
Came through the lapped leaves sifting,  
sifting,  
Came to the gates of sleep.  
Then my thoughts, in the dark of the dungeon-  
keep  
Of the Castle of Captives hid in the City of  
Sleep,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Upstart'd, by twos and by threes assembling; 10

The gates of sleep fell a-trembling  
Like as the lips of a lady that forth falter yes,  
Shaken with happiness:  
The gates of sleep stood wide.

I have waked, I have come, my beloved! I  
might not abide:  
I have come ere the dawn, O beloved, my  
live-oaks, to hide  
In your gospelling glooms,—to be  
As a lover in heaven, the marsh my marsh and  
the sea my sea.

Tell me, sweet burly-barked, man-embodied  
Tree  
That mine arms in the dark are embracing,  
dost know 20  
From what fount are these tears at thy feet  
which flow?  
They rise not from reason, but deeper inconse-  
quent deeps.  
Reason 's not one that weeps.  
What logic of greeting lies  
Betwixt dear over-beautiful trees and the rain  
of the eyes?

O cunning green leaves, little masters! like  
as ye gloss  
All the dull-tissued dark with your luminous  
darks that emboss

## Sunrise

The vague blackness of night into pattern  
and plan,

So,

(But would I could know, but would I  
could know,) 30

With your question embroidering the dark of  
the question of man,—

So, with your silences purfling this silence of man  
While his cry to the dead for some knowledge  
is under the ban,

Under the ban,—

So, ye have wrought me  
Designs on the night of our knowledge,—yea,  
ye have taught me,

So,

That haply we know somewhat more than we  
know.

Ye lispers, whisperers, singers in storms,  
Ye consciences murmuring faiths under  
forms, 40

Ye ministers meet for each passion that  
grieves,

Friendly, sisterly, sweetheart leaves,  
Oh, rain me down from your darks that contain  
me

Wisdoms ye winnow from winds that pain me,—  
Sift down tremors of sweet-within-sweet  
That advise me of more than they bring,—repeat  
Me the woods-smell that swiftly but now brought  
breath

From the heaven-side bank of the river of death,—

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Teach me the terms of silence,—preach me  
The passion of patience,—sift me,—impeach  
me,—

50

And there, oh there  
As ye hang with your myriad palms upturned  
in the air,

Pray me a myriad prayer.

My gossip, the owl,—is it thou  
That out of the leaves of the low-hanging  
bough,

As I pass to the beach, art stirred?  
Dumb woods, have ye uttered a bird?

Reverend Marsh, low-couched along the sea,  
Old chemist, rapt in alchemy,

Distilling silence,—lo,

60

That which our father-age had died to know—  
The menstruum that dissolves all  
matter—thou

Hast found it; for this silence, filling now  
The globèd charity of receiving space,  
This solves us all: man, matter, doubt, disgrace,  
Death, love, sin, sanity,

Must in yon silence, clear solution lie,—  
Too clear! That crystal nothing who 'll peruse?  
The blackest night could bring us brighter news.  
Yet precious qualities of silence haunt

70

Round these vast margins, ministrant.  
Oh, if thy soul 's at latter gasp for space,  
With trying to breathe no bigger than thy race  
Just to be fellowed, when that thou hast found  
No man with room, or grace enough of bound,

## Sunrise

To entertain that New thou tellst, thou art,—  
'T is here, 't is here, thou canst unhánd thy  
heart

And breathe it free, and breathe it free,  
By rangy marsh, in lone sea-liberty.

The tide 's at full; the marsh with flooded  
streams

80

Glimmers, a limpid labyrinth of dreams.  
Each winding creek in grave entrancement lies  
A rhapsody of morning-stars. The skies  
Shine scant with one forked galaxy,—  
The marsh brags ten: looped on his breast  
they lie.

Oh, what if sound should be made!  
Oh, what if a bound should be laid  
To this bow-and-string tension of beauty and  
silence a-spring,—

To the bend of beauty the bow, or the hold  
of silence the string!

I fear me, I fear me yon dome of diaphanous  
gleam

90

Will break as a bubble o'er-blown in a dream,—  
Yon dome of too-tenuous tissues of space and  
night,

Over-weighted with stars, over-freighted with  
light,

Over-sated with beauty and silence, will seem

But a bubble that broke in a dream,  
If a bound of degree to this grace be laid,  
Or a sound or a motion made.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

But no: it is made: list! somewhere,—mystery,  
where?

In the leaves? in the air?

In my heart? is a motion made: 100

'T is a motion of dawn, like a flicker of shade  
on shade.

In the leaves 't is palpable: low multitudinous  
stirring

Upwinds through the woods; the little ones,  
softly conferring,

Have settled my lord's to be looked for; so,  
they are still;

But the air and my heart and the earth are  
a-thrill,—

And look where the wild duck sails round the  
bend of the river,—

And look where a passionate shiver

Expectant is bending the blades

Of the marsh-grass in serial shimmers and  
shades,—

And invisible wings, fast fleeting, fast fleeting, 110

Are beating

The dark overhead as my heart beats,—and  
steady and free

Is the ebb-tide flowing from marsh to sea—

(Run home, little streams,

With your lapfuls of stars and dreams),—

And a sailor unseen is hoisting a-peak,

For list, down the inshore curve of the creek

How merrily flutters the sail,—

And lo, in the East! Will the East unveil?

## Sunrise

The East is unveiled, the East hath confessed <sup>120</sup>  
A flush: 't is dead; 't is alive: 't is dead, ere  
the West

Was aware of it: nay, 't is abiding, 't is unwith-  
drawn:

Have a care, sweet Heaven! 'T is Dawn.

Now a dream of a flame through that dream of  
a flush is uprolled:

To the zenith ascending, a dome of un-  
dazzling gold

Is builded, in shape as a bee-hive, from out of  
the sea:

The hive is of gold undazzling, but oh, the Bee,  
The star-fed Bee, the build-fire Bee,  
Of dazzling gold is the great Sun-Bee  
That shall flash from the hive-hole over the  
sea. 130

Yet now the dewdrop, now the morning  
gray.

Shall live their little lucid sober day  
Ere with the sun their souls exhale away.

Now in each pettiest personal sphere of dew  
The summed moon shines complete as in the blue  
Big dewdrop of all heaven: with these lit shrines  
O'er silvered to the farthest sea-confines,  
The sacramental marsh one pious plain  
Of worship lies. Peace to the ante-reign  
Of Mary Morning, blissful mother mild. 140  
Minded of nought but peace, and of a child.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Not slower than Majesty moves, for a mean  
and a measure  
Of motion,—not faster than dateless Olympian  
leisure  
Might pace with unblown ample garments from  
pleasure to pleasure,—  
The wave-serrate sea-rim sinks unjarring,  
unreeling,  
Forever revealing, revealing, revealing,  
Edgewise, bladewise, halfwise, wholewise,—'t is  
done!

Good-morrow, Lord Sun!  
With several voice, with ascription one,  
The woods and the marsh and the sea and my  
soul 150  
Unto thee, whence the glittering stream of all  
morrrows doth roll,  
Cry good and past good and most heavenly  
morrow, Lord Sun.

O Artisan born in the purple,—Workman Heat,—  
Parter of passionate atoms that travail to meet  
And be mixed in the death-cold oneness,—  
innermost Guest  
At the marriage of elements,—fellow of pub-  
licans,—blest  
King in the blouse of flame, that loiterest o'er  
The idle skies yet laborest past evermore,—  
Thou, in the fine' forge-thunder, thou, in the beat  
Of the heart of a man, thou Motive,—Laborer  
Heat: 160

## Sunrise

Yea, Artist, thou, of whose art yon sea 's all  
news,  
With his inshore greens and manifold mid-sea  
blues,  
Pearl-glint, shell-tint, ancientest, perfectest hues  
Ever shaming the maidens,—lily and rose  
Confess thee, and each mild flame that glows  
In the clarified virginal bosoms of stones that  
shine,  
It is thine, it is thine:

Thou chemist of storms, whether driving the  
winds a-swirl  
Or a-flicker the subtler essences polar that whirl  
In the magnet earth,—yea, thou with a storm  
for a heart. 170  
Rent with debate, many-spotted<sup>4</sup> with question,  
part  
From part oft sundered, yet ever a globed light,  
Yet ever the artist, ever more large and bright  
Than the eye of a man may avail of:—manifold  
One,  
I must pass from the face, I must pass from the  
face of the Sun:  
Old Want is awake and agog, every wrinkle  
a-frown;  
The worker must pass to his work in the  
terrible town:  
But I fear not, nay, and I fear not the thing to  
be done:  
I am strong with the strength of my lord  
the Sun:

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

How dark, how dark soever the race that must  
needs be run, 180  
I am lit with the Sun.

Oh, never the mast-high run of the seas  
Of traffic shall hide thee,  
Never the hell-colored smoke of the factories  
Hide thee,  
Never the reek of the time's fen-politics  
Hide thee.  
And ever my heart through the night shall with  
knowledge abide thee.  
And ever by day shall my spirit, as one that  
hath tried thee,  
Labor, at leisure, in art,—till yonder beside  
thee, 190  
My soul shall float, friend Sun,  
The day being done.

1882.

*Sidney Lanier.*

## A FOREST HYMN

THE groves were God's first temples. Ere  
man learned  
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,  
And spread the roof above them—ere he  
framed  
The lofty vault, to gather and roll back  
The sound of anthems; in the darkling wood,  
Amidst the cool and silence, he knelt down,  
And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks

## A Forest Hymn

And supplication. For his simple heart  
Might not resist the sacred influences  
Which, from the stilly twilight of the place, 10  
And from the gray old trunks that high in heaven  
Mingled their mossy boughs, and from the sound  
Of the invisible breath that swayed at once  
All their green tops, stole over him, and bowed  
His spirit with the thought of boundless power  
And inaccessible majesty. Ah, why  
Should we, in the world's riper years, neglect  
God's ancient sanctuaries, and adore  
Only among the crowd, and under roofs  
That our frail hands have raised? Let me, at  
least, 20  
Here, in the shadow of this aged wood,  
Offer one hymn—thrice happy if I find  
Acceptance in His ear.

Father, thy hand  
Hath reared these venerable columns, thou  
Didst weave this verdant roof. Thou didst look  
down  
Upon the naked earth, and forthwith rose  
All these fair ranks of trees. They in thy sun  
Budded, and shook their green leaves in thy  
breeze,  
And shot towards heaven. The century-living  
crow, 30  
Whose birth was in their tops, grew old and  
died  
Among their branches, till at last they stood,  
As now they stand, massy and tall and dark.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Fit shrine for humble worshipper to hold  
Communion with his Maker. These dim vaults,  
These winding aisles, of human pomp or pride  
Report not. No fantastic carvings show  
The boast of our vain race to change the form  
Of thy fair works. But thou art here—thou  
fill'st

The solitude. Thou art in the soft winds 40  
That run along the summit of these trees  
In music; thou art in the cooler breath  
That from the inmost darkness of the place  
Comes, scarcely felt; the barky trunks, the  
ground,  
The fresh moist ground, are all instinct with  
thee.

Here is continual worship:—Nature, here,  
In the tranquillity that thou dost love.  
Enjoys thy presence. Noiselessly around,  
From perch to perch, the solitary bird  
Passes; and yon clear spring, that, midst its  
herbs, 50  
Wells softly forth and wandering steep the  
roots

Of half the mighty forest, tells no tale  
Of all the good it does. Thou hast not left  
Thyself without a witness, in the shades,  
Of thy perfections. Grandeur, strength, and  
grace

Are here to speak of thee. This mighty oak—  
By whose immovable stem I stand and seem  
Almost annihilated—not a prince,  
In all that proud old world beyond the deep,

## A Forest Hymn

E'er wore his crown as loftily as he 60  
Wears the green coronal of leaves with which  
Thy hand has graced him. Nestled at his root  
Is beauty, such as blooms not in the glare  
Of the broad sun. That delicate forest flower  
With scented breath and look so like a smile,  
Seems, as it issues from the shapeless mould,  
An emanation of the indwelling Life,  
A visible token of the upholding Love,  
That are the soul of this great universe.

My heart is awed within me when I think 70  
Of the great miracle that still goes on,  
In silence, round me,—the perpetual work  
Of thy creation, finished, yet renewed  
Forever. Written on thy works I read  
The lesson of thy own eternity.  
Lo! all grow old and die—but see again,  
How on the faltering footsteps of decay  
Youth presses—ever gay and beautiful youth  
In all its beautiful forms. These lofty trees  
Wave not less proudly than their ancestors 80  
Moulder beneath them. Oh, there is not lost  
One of Earth's charms! upon her bosom yet,  
After the flight of untold centuries,  
The freshness of her far beginning lies  
And yet shall lie. Life mocks the idle hate  
Of his arch-enemy Death—yea, seats himself  
Upon the tyrant's throne, the sepulchre,  
And of the triumphs of his ghastly foe  
Makes his own nourishment. For he came forth  
From thine own bosom, and shall have no end. 90

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

There have been holy men who hid themselves  
Deep in the woody wilderness, and gave  
Their lives to thought and prayer, till they out-  
lived

The generation born with them, nor seemed  
Less aged than the hoary trees and rocks  
Around them;—and there have been holy men  
Who deemed it were not well to pass life thus.  
But let me often to these solitudes  
Retire, and in thy presence reassure  
My feeble virtue. Here its enemies, 100  
The passions, at thy plainer footsteps shrink  
And tremble and are still. O God! when thou  
Dost scare the world with tempests, set on fire  
The heavens with falling thunderbolts, or fill,  
With all the waters of the firmament,  
The swift dark whirlwind that uproots the woods  
And drowns the villages; when, at thy call,  
Uprises the great deep, and throws himself  
Upon the continent, and overwhelms  
Its cities—who forgets not, at the sight 110  
Of these tremendous tokens of thy power,  
His pride, and lays his strifes and follies by?  
Oh, from these sterner aspects of thy face  
Spare me and mine, nor let us need the wrath  
Of the mad unchained elements to teach  
Who rules them. Be it ours to meditate,  
In these calm shades, thy milder majesty,  
And to the beautiful order of thy works  
Learn to conform the order of our lives.

1825.

*William Cullen Bryant.*

## WALDEINSAMKEIT

I do not count the hours I spend  
In wandering by the sea;  
The forest is my loyal friend.  
Like God it useth me. 4

In plains that room for shadows make  
Of skirting hills to lie,  
Bound in by streams which give and take  
Their colors from the sky: 8

Or on the mountain-crest sublime,  
Or down the oaken glade,  
O what have I to do with time?  
For this the day was made 12

Cities of mortals woe-begone  
Fantastic care derides,  
But in the serious landscape lone  
Stern benefit abides. 16

Sheen will tarnish, honey cloy,  
And merry is only a mask of sad,  
But, sober on a fund of joy,  
The woods at heart are glad. 20

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

There the great Planter plants  
Of fruitful worlds the grain,  
And with a million spells enchants  
The souls that walk in pain. 24

Still on the seeds of all he made  
The rose of beauty burns ;  
Through times that wear and forms  
that fade,  
Immortal youth returns. 28

The black ducks mounting from the lake,  
The pigeon in the pines,  
The bittern's boom, a desert make  
Which no false art refines. 32

Down in yon watery nook,  
Where bearded mists divide,  
The gray old gods whom Chaos knew,  
The sires of Nature, hide. 36

Aloft, in secret veins of air,  
Blows the sweet breath of song,  
O, few to scale those uplands dare,  
Though they to all belong! 40

See thou bring not to field or stone  
The fancies found in books ;  
Leave authors' eyes, and fetch your own,  
To brave the landscape's looks. 44

## The Oak

Oblivion here thy wisdom is,  
Thy thrift, the sleep of cares ;  
For a proud idleness like this  
Crowns all thy mean affairs. 48

1858.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

## THE OAK

LIVE thy Life,  
Young and old,  
Like yon oak, ,  
Bright in spring,  
Living gold ; 5

Summer-rich  
Then ; and then  
Autumn-changed,  
Soberer-hued  
Gold again. 10

All his leaves  
Fallen at length,  
Look, he stands,  
Trunk and bough,  
Naked strength. 15

1889.

*Lord Tennyson.*

## A STRIP OF BLUE

I do not own an inch of land,  
But all I see is mine,—  
The orchard and the mowing-fields,  
The lawns and gardens fine.  
The winds my tax-collectors are,  
They bring me tithes divine,—  
Wild scents and subtle essences,  
A tribute rare and free;  
And, more magnificent than all,  
My window keeps for me  
A glimpse of blue immensity,—  
A little strip of sea.

12

Richer am I than he who owns  
Great fleets and argosies;  
I have a share in every ship  
Won by the inland breeze,  
To loiter on yon airy road  
Above the apple-trees.  
I freight them with my untold dreams;  
Each bears my own picked crew;  
And nobler cargoes wait for them  
Than ever India knew,—  
My ships that sail into the East  
Across that outlet blue.

24

## A Strip of Blue

Sometimes they seem like living shapes,—

The people of the sky,—

Guests in white raiment coming down

From heaven, which is close by

I call them by familiar names,

As one by one draws nigh

So white so light, so spirit like,

From violets mists they bloom !

The aching wastes of the unknown

Are half reclaimed from gloom,

Since on life's hospitable sea

All souls find sailing-room

36

The ocean grows a weariness,

With nothing else in sight,

Its east and west its north and south,

Spread out from morn till night

We miss the warm caressing shore,

Its brooding shade and light

A part is greater than the whole,

By hints are mysteries told

The fringes of eternity,—

God's sweeping garment fold,

In that bright shred of glittering sea,

I reach out for and hold

48

The sails, like flakes of roseate pearl,

Float in upon the mist,

The waves are broken precious stones,—

Sapphire and amethyst

Washed from celestial basement walls,

By suns unsetting kissed

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Out through the utmost gates of space,  
Past where the gray stars drift,  
To the widening Infinite, my soul  
Glides on, a vessel swift,  
Yet loses not her anchorage  
In yonder azure rift.

60

Here sit I, as a little child;  
The threshold of God's door  
Is that clear band of chrysoprase;  
Now the vast temple floor,  
The blinding glory of the dome  
I bow my head before.  
Thy universe, O God, is home,  
In height or depth, to me;  
Yet here upon thy footstool green  
Content 'am I to be,  
Glad when is oped unto my need  
Some sea-like glimpse of Thee.

72

1880.

*Lucy Larcom.*

## ON A PICTURE OF PEELE CASTLE, IN A STORM

I WAS thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile!  
Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee:  
I saw thee every day; and all the while  
Thy Form was sleeping on a glassy sea.

4

So pure the sky, so quiet was the air!  
So like, so very like, was day to day!

## On a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm

Whene'er I looked, thy Image still was there;  
It trembled, but it never passed away. 8

How perfect was the calm! it seemed no sleep;  
No mood, which season takes away, or brings:  
I could have fancied that the mighty Deep  
Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things. 12

Ah! THEN, if mine had been the Painter's hand,  
To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,  
The light that never was, on sea or land,  
The consecration, and the Poet's dream; 16

I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile  
Amid a world how different from this!  
Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;  
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss. 20

Thou shouldst have seemed a treasure-house  
divine  
Of peaceful years; a chronicle of heaven;—  
Of all the sunbeams that did ever shine  
The very sweetest had to thee been given. 24

A Picture had it been of lasting ease,  
Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;  
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,  
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life. 28

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,  
Such Picture would I at that time have made:

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And seen the soul of truth in every part,  
A steadfast peace that might not be betrayed. 33

So once it would have been,—'t is so no more;  
I have submitted to a new control:  
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;  
A deep distress hath humanised my Soul. 36

Not for a moment could I now behold  
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:  
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;  
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene. 40

Then, Beaumont, Friend! who would have been  
the Friend,  
If he had lived, of Him whom I deplore,  
This work of thine I blame not, but commend;  
This sea in anger, and that dismal shore. 44

O 't is a passionate Work!—yet wise and well,  
Well chosen in the spirit that is here;  
That Hulk which labours in the deadly swell,  
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear! 48

And this huge Castle, standing here sublime,  
I love to see the look with which it braves,  
Cased in the unfeeling armor of old time,  
The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling  
waves. 52

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,  
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!

## Tintern Abbey

Such happiness, wherever it be known,  
Is to be pitied; for 't is surely blind. 56

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,  
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!  
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.—  
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn. 60

1805. 1807.

*William Wordsworth.*

## TINTERN ABBEY

FIVE years have past; five summers, with the  
length  
Of five long winters! and again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain-  
springs  
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again  
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,  
That on a wild secluded scene impress  
Thoughts of more deep seclusion, and connect  
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.  
The day is come when I again repose  
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view 10  
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-  
tufts,  
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves  
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see  
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little  
lines

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,  
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke  
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!  
With some uncertain notice, as might seem  
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods, 20  
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire  
The Hermit sits alone.

These beautiful forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind, 30  
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too  
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,  
As have no slight or trivial influence  
On that best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered acts  
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,  
To them I may have owed another gift,  
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
In which the burden of the mystery, 40  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:

## Tintern Abbey

While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things. 50

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, Oh! how oft—  
In darkness and amid the many shapes  
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir  
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,  
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—  
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,  
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer through the  
woods,

How often has my spirit turned to thee!  
And now, with gleams of half-extinguished  
thought, 60

With many recognitions dim and faint,  
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
The picture of the mind revives again:  
While here I stand, not only with the sense  
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
That in this moment there is life and food  
For future years. And so I dare to hope,  
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was  
when first

I came among these hills; when like a roe  
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides 70  
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
Wherever nature led: more like a man  
Flying from something that he dreads, than one  
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then  
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days  
And their glad animal movements all gone by)

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

To me was all in all.—I cannot paint  
What then I was. The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood, 80  
Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,  
By thoughts supplied, nor any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,  
And all its aching joys are now no more,  
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this  
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts  
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,  
Abundant recompense. For I have learned 90  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air, 100  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I  
still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world

## Tintern Abbey

Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,  
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize  
In nature and the language of the sense, 110  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,  
If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:  
For thou art with me here upon the banks  
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,  
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch  
The language of my former heart, and read 120  
My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while  
May I behold in thee what I was once.  
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,  
Knowing that Nature never did betray,  
The heart that loved her; 't is her privilege,  
Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
From joy to joy: for she can so inform  
The mind that is within us, so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed 130  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon  
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;  
And let the misty mountain-winds be free

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

To blow against thee: and, in after years, 140  
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured  
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind  
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,  
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place  
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; Oh! then,  
If solitude or fear or pain or grief  
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,  
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance,—  
If I should be where I no more can hear 150  
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these  
gleams

Of past existence—wilt thou then forget  
That on the banks of this delightful stream  
We stood together; and that I, so long  
A worshipper of Nature, hither came  
Unwearied in that service: rather say  
With warmer love—Oh! with far deeper zeal  
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget  
That after many wanderings, many years  
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs, 160  
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me  
More dear, both for themselves and for thy  
sake!

1798.

*William Wordsworth.*

## YARROW UNVISITED

FROM Stirling castle we had seen  
The mazy Forth unravelled ;  
Had trod the banks of Clyde, and Tay,  
And with the Tweed had travelled ;  
And when we came to Clovenford,  
Then said my "*winsome Marrow*,"  
"Whate'er betide, we 'll turn aside,  
And see the Braes of Yarrow." 8

"Let Yarrow folk, *frae* Selkirk town,  
Who have been buying, selling,  
Go back to Yarrow, 't is their own ;  
Each maiden to her dwelling !  
On Yarrow's banks let herons feed,  
Hares couch, and rabbits burrow !  
But we will downward with the Tweed,  
Nor turn aside to Yarrow. 16

"There 's Galla Water, Leader Haughs,  
Both lying right before us ;  
And Dryborough, where with chiming  
Tweed  
The lintwhites sing in chorus ;  
There 's pleasant Tiviot-dale, a land  
Made blithe with plough and harrow :

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Why throw away a needful day  
To go in search of Yarrow?

24

"What 's Yarrow but a river bare,  
That glides the dark hills under?  
There are a thousand such elsewhere  
As worthy of your wonder."  
—Strange words they seemed of slight and  
scorn

My True-love sighed for sorrow;  
And looked me in the face, to think  
I thus could speak of Yarrow!

32

"Oh! green," said I, "are Yarrow's holms,  
And sweet is Yarrow flowing!  
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,  
But we will leave it growing.  
O'er hilly path, and open Strath,  
We 'll wander Scotland thorough;  
But, though so near, we will not turn  
Into the dale of Yarrow.

40

"Let beeves and home-bred kine partake  
The sweets of Burn-mill meadow;  
The swan on still St. Mary's Lake  
Float double, swan and shadow!  
We will not see them; will not go,  
To-day, nor yet to-morrow,  
Enough if in our hearts we know  
There 's such a place as Yarrow.

48

## The Marshes of Glynn

"Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown!  
It must, or we shall rue it:  
We have a vision of our own;  
Ah! why should we undo it?  
The treasured dreams of times long past,  
We 'll keep them, winsome Marrow!  
For when we 're there, although 't is fair,  
'T will be another Yarrow!" 56

"If Care with freezing years should come,  
And wandering seem but folly,—  
Should we be loth to stir from home,  
And yet be melancholy;  
Should life be dull, and spirits low,  
'T will soothe us in our sorrow.  
That earth has something yet to show,  
The bonny holms of Yarrow!"

1803. 1807.

*William Wordsworth.*

## THE MARSHES OF GLYNN

GLOOMS of the live-oaks, beautiful-braided and  
woven  
With intricate shades of the vines that myriad-  
cloven  
Clamber the forks of the multiform boughs,—  
Emerald twilights.—  
Virginal shy lights,  
Wrought of the leaves to allure to the whisper  
of vows.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

When lovers pace timidly down through the green  
colonnades

Of the dim sweet woods, of the dear dark woods,  
Of the heavenly woods and glades,  
That run to the radiant marginal sand-beach  
within

10

The wide sea-marshes of Glynn;—

Beautiful glooms, soft dusks in the noon-day  
fire,—

Wildwood privacies, closets of lone desire,  
Chamber from chamber parted with wavering  
arras of leaves,—

Cells for the passionate pleasure of prayer to  
the soul that grieves,  
Pure with a sense of the passing of saints through  
the wood,

Cool for the dutiful weighing of ill with good;—

O braided dusks of the oak and woven shades of  
the vine,

While the riotous noon-day sun of the June-day  
long did shine

Ye held me fast in your heart and I held you  
fast in mine;

20

But now when the noon is no more, and riot  
is rest,

And the sun is a-wait at the ponderous gate of  
the West,

And the slant yellow beam down with the wood-  
aisle doth seem

Like a lane into heaven that leads from a dream,—

## The Marshes of Glynn

Ay, now, when my soul all day hath drunken  
                                soul of the oak,  
And my heart is at ease from men, and the  
                                wearisome sound of the stroke  
Of the scythe of time and the trowel of trade  
                                is low,  
And belief overmasters doubt, and I know  
                                that I know,  
And my spirit is grown to a lordly great  
                                compass within,  
That the length and the breadth and the sweep  
                                of the marshes of Glynn                                  39  
Will work me no fear like the fear they have  
                                wrought me of yore  
When length was fatigue, and when breadth was  
                                but bitterness sore,  
And when terror and shrinking and dreary  
                                unnamable pain  
Drew over me out of the mercil/ess miles of the  
                                plain,—

Oh, now, afraid, I am fain to face  
The vast sweet visage of space.  
To the edge of the wood I am drawn, I am  
                                drawn,  
Where the gray beach glimmering runs, as a  
                                belt of the dawn,  
For a mete and a mark  
To the forest-dark:—                                  40  
So:  
Affable live-oak. leaning low,—

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Thus—with your favor—soft, with a reverent  
hand,  
(Not lightly touching your person, Lord of the  
land!)

Bending your beauty aside, with a step I stand  
On the firm-packed sand,  
Free  
By a world of marsh that borders a world of sea.  
Sinuous southward and sinuous northward  
the shimmering band  
Of the sand-beach fastens the fringe of the  
marsh to the folds of the land. 50  
Inward and outward to northward and south-  
ward the beach-lines linger and  
curl  
As a silver-wrought garment that clings to and  
follows the firm sweet limbs of a  
girl.  
Vanishing, swelling, evermore curving again into  
sight,  
Softly the sand-beach wavers away to a dim gray  
looping of light.  
And what if behind me to westward the wall of  
the woods stands high?  
The world lies east: how ample, the marsh and  
the sea and the sky!  
A league and a league of marsh-grass, waist-  
high, broad in the blade,  
Green, and all of a height, and unflecked with a  
light or a shade,  
Stretch leisurely off, in a pleasant plain,  
To the terminal blue of the main. 60

## The Marshes of Glynn

Oh, what is abroad in the marsh and the terminal  
sea?

Somehow my soul seems suddenly free  
From the weighing of fate and the sad discussion  
of sin,

By the length and the breadth and the sweep of  
the marshes of Glynn

Ye marshes, how candid and simple and nothing-  
withholding and free

Ye publish yourselves to the sky and offer your-  
selves to the sea!

Tolerant plains that suffer the sea and the rains  
and the sun

Ye spread and span like the catholic man who  
hath mightily won

God out of knowledge and good out of infinite  
pain

And sight out of blindness and purity out of  
stain

70

As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery  
sod,

Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness  
of God

I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh-  
hen flies

In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the  
marsh and the skies

By so many roots as the marsh grass sends in the  
sod

I will heartily lay me a-hold on the greatness of  
God

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Oh, like to the greatness of God is the greatness  
within

The range of the marshes, the liberal marshes of  
Glynn.

And the sea lends large, as the marsh: lo, out of  
his plenty the sea

Pours fast: full soon the time of the flood-tide  
must be: 80

Look how the grace of the sea doth go  
About and about through the intricate channels  
that flow

Here and there

Everywhere,

Till his waters have flooded the uttermost creeks  
and the low-lying lanes.

And the marsh is meshed with a million veins.  
That like as with rosy and silvery essences flow  
In the rose-and-silver evening glow.

Farewell, my lord Sun!

The creeks overflow: a thousand rivulets run 90  
'Twixt the roots of the sod; the blades of the  
marsh-grass stir;

Passeth a hurrying sound of wings that westward  
whirr;

Passeth, and all is still; and the currents cease  
to run;

And the sea and the marsh are one.

How still the plains of the waters be!

The tide is in his ecstasy.

The tide is at his highest height;

And it is night.

## Lines Written among Euganean Hills

And now from the Vast of the Lord will the  
waters sleep  
Roll in on the souls of men, 100  
But who will reveal to our waking ken  
The forms that swim and the shapes that creep  
Under the waters of sleep?  
And I would I could know what swimmeth below  
when the tide comes in  
On the length and breadth of the marvellous  
marshes of Glynn.

1879.

*Sidney Lanier.*

## LINES WRITTEN AMONG THE EUGANEAN HILLS

MANY a green isle needs must be  
In the deep wide sea of misery,  
Or the mariner, worn and wan,  
Never thus could voyage on  
Day and night, and night and day,  
Drifting on his dreary way,  
With the solid darkness black  
Closing round his vessel's track;  
Whilst above, the sunless sky,  
Big with clouds, hangs heavily, 10  
And behind the tempest fleet  
Hurries on with lightning feet,  
Riving sail and cord and plank  
Till the ship has almost drank

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Death from the o'erbrimming deep;  
And sinks down, down, like that sleep  
When the dreamer seems to be  
Weltering through eternity;  
And the dim low line before  
Of a dark and distant shore 20  
Still recedes, as, ever still  
Longing with divided will,  
But no power to seek or shun,  
He is ever drifted on  
O'er the unreposing wave  
To the haven of the grave.  
What, if there no friends will greet;  
What, if there no heart will meet  
His with love's impatient beat;  
Wander wheresoe'er he may, 30  
Can he dream before that day  
To find refuge from distress  
In friendship's smile, in love's caress?  
Then, 't will wreak him little woe  
Whether such there be or no:  
Senseless is the breast; and cold,  
Which relenting love would fold;  
Bloodless are the veins and chill  
Which the pulse of pain did fill;  
Every little living nerve 40  
That from bitter words did swerve  
Round the tortured lips and brow,  
Are like sapless leaflets now  
Frozen upon December's bough.  
On the beach of a northern sea  
Which tempests shake eternally,

## Lines Written among Euganean Hills

As once the wretch there lay to sleep,  
Lies a solitary heap,  
One white skull and seven dry bones,  
On the margin of the stones, 50  
Where a few gray rushes stand,  
Boundaries of the sea and land:  
Nor is heard one voice of wail  
But the sea-mews, as they sail  
O'er the billows of the gale;  
Or the whirlwind up and down  
Howling, like a slaughtered town,  
When a king in glory rides  
Through the pomp of fratricides:  
Those unburied bones around 60  
There is many a mournful sound;  
There is no lament for him,  
Like a sunless vapor, dim,  
Who once clothed with life and thought  
What now moves nor murmurs not.

Ay, many flowering islands lie  
In the waters of wide agony:  
To such a one this morn was led  
My bark, by soft winds piloted.  
'Mid the mountains Euganean 70  
I stood listening to the pæan  
With which the legioned rooks did hail  
The sun's uprise majestic:  
Gathering round with wings all hoar,  
Through the dewy mist they soar  
Like gray shades, till the eastern heaven  
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Flecked with fire and azure, lie  
In the unfathomable sky,  
So their plumes of purple grain, 80  
Starred with drops of golden rain,  
Gleam above the sunlight woods,  
As in silent multitudes  
On the morning's fitful gale  
Through the broken mist they sail;  
And the vapours cloven and gleaming  
Follow down the dark steep streaming,  
Till all is bright and clear and still  
Round the solitary hill.

Beneath is spread like a green sea 90  
The waveless plain of Lombardy,  
Bounded by the vaporous air,  
Islanded by cities fair;  
Underneath Italy's azure eyes,  
Ocean's nursing, Venice, lies,—  
A peopled labyrinth of walls,  
Amphitrite's destined halls,  
Which her hoary sire now paves  
With his blue and beaming waves.  
Lo! the sun upsprings behind, 100  
Broad, red, radiant, half reclined  
On the level quivering line  
Of the waters crystalline;  
And before that chasm of light,  
As within a furnace bright,  
Column, tower, and dome, and spire  
Shine like obelisks of fire.

## Lines Written among Euganean Hills

Pointing with inconstant motion  
From the altar of dark ocean  
To the sapphire-tinted skies; 111  
As the flames of sacrifice  
From the marble shrines did rise,  
As to pierce the dome of gold  
Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sun-girt city! thou hast been  
Ocean's child, and then his queen;  
Now is comê a darker day,  
And thou soon must be his prey,  
If the power that raised thee here  
Hallow so thy watery bier. 120  
A less drear ruin then than now,  
With thy conquest-branded brow  
Stooping to the slave of slaves  
From thy throne among the waves  
Wilt thou be when the sea-mew  
Flies, as once before it flew,  
O'er thine isles depopulate,  
And all is in its ancient state,  
Save where many a palace-gate  
With green sea-flowers overgrown 130  
Like a rock of ocean's own,  
Topples o'er the abandoned sea  
As the tides change sullenly.  
The fisher on his watery way  
Wandering at the close of day  
Will spread his sail and seize his oar  
Till he pass the gloomy shore,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Lest thy dead should, from their sleep  
Bursting o'er the starlight deep,  
Lead a rapid mask of death 140  
O'er the waters of his path.

Those who alone thy towers behold  
Quivering through ærial gold,  
As I now behold them here,  
Would imagine not they were  
Sepulchres, where human forms,  
Like pollution-nourished worms  
To the corpse of greatness cling,  
Murdered, and now mouldering:  
But if Freedom should awake 150  
In her omnipotence, and shake  
From the Celtic Anarch's hold  
All the keys of dungeons cold,  
Where a hundred cities lie  
Chained like thee, ingloriously,  
Thou and all thy sister band  
Might adorn this sunny land,  
Twining memories of old time  
With new virtues more sublime;  
If not, perish thou and they, 160  
Clouds which stain truth's rising day  
By her sun consumed away,  
Earth can spare ye: while like flowers,  
In the waste of years and hours,  
From your dust new nations spring  
With more kindly blossoming.  
Perish—let there only be  
Floating o'er thy heartless sea

## Lines Written among Euganean Hills

As the garment of thy sky  
Clothes the world immortally, 170  
One remembrance, more sublime  
Than the tattered pall of time,  
Which scarce hides thy visage wan;—  
That a tempest-cleaving Swan  
Of the songs of Albion,  
Driven from his ancestral streams  
By the might of evil dreams,  
Found a nest in thee; and Ocean  
Welcomed him with such emotion  
That its joy grew his, and sprung 180  
From his lips like music flung  
O'er a mighty thunder-fit  
Chastening terror:—what though yet  
Poesy's unfailing River,  
Which thro' Albion winds for ever  
Lashing with melodious wave  
Many a sacred Poet's grave,  
Mourn its latest nursling fled?  
What though thou with all thy dead  
Scarce can for this fame repay 190  
Aught thine own? oh, rather say  
Though thy sins and slaveries foul  
Overcloud a sunlike soul?  
As the ghost of Homer clings  
Round Scamander's wasting springs;  
As divinest Shakespere's might  
Fills Avon and the world with light  
Like omniscient power which he  
Imaged 'mid mortality;  
As the love from Petrarch's urn, 200  
Yet amid yon hills doth burn,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

A quenchless lamp by which the heart  
Sees things unearthly ;—so thou art  
Mighty spirit—so shall be  
The City that did refuge thee.

Lo, the sun floats up the sky  
Like thought-wingèd Liberty,  
Till the universal light  
Seems to level plain and height ;  
From the sea a mist has spread, 210  
And the beams of morn lie dead  
On the towers of Venice now,  
Like its glory long ago.  
By the skirts of that gray cloud  
Many-domèd Padua proud  
Stands, a peopled solitude,  
'Mid the harvest-shining plain,  
Where the peasant heaps his grain  
In the garner of his foe,  
And the milk-white oxen slow 220  
With the purple vintage strain,  
Heaped upon the creaking wain,  
That the brutal Celt may swill  
Drunken sleep with savage will ;  
And the sickle to the sword  
Lies unchanged, though many a lord,  
Like a weed whose shade is poison,  
Overgrows this region's foison,  
Sheaves of whom are ripe to come  
To destruction's harvest home : 230  
Men must reap the things they sow,  
Force from force must ever flow,

## Lines Written among Euganean Hills

Or worse; but 't is a bitter woe  
That love or reason cannot change  
The despot's rage, the slave's revenge.

Padua, thou within whose walls  
Those mute guests at festivals,  
Son and Mother, Death and Sin,  
Played at dice for Ezzelin,  
Till Death cried, "I win, I win!" 240  
And Sin cursed to lose the wager,  
But Death promised, to assuage her,  
That he would petition for  
Her to be made Vice-Emperor,  
When the destined years were o'er,  
Over all between the Po  
And the eastern Alpine snow,  
Under the mighty Austrian.  
Sin smiled so as Sin only can,  
And since that time, ay, long before, 250  
Both have ruled from shore to shore,  
That incestuous pair, who follow  
Tyrants as the sun the swallow,  
As Repentance follows Crime,  
And as changes follow Time.

In thine halls the lamp of learning,  
Padua, now no more is burning;  
Like a meteor, whose wild way  
Is lost over the grave of day,  
It gleams betrayed and to betray: 260  
Once remotest nations came  
To adore that sacred flame,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

When it lit not many a hearth  
On this cold and gloomy earth:  
Now new fires from antique light  
Spring beneath the wide world's might;  
But their spark lies dead in thee,  
Trampled out by tyranny.  
As the Norway woodman quells,  
In the depth of piny dells, 270  
One light flame among the brakes,  
While the boundless forest shakes,  
And its mighty trunks are torn  
By the fire thus lowly born:  
The spark beneath his feet is dead,  
He starts to see the flames it fed  
Howling through the darkened sky  
With a myriad tongues victoriously,  
And sinks down in fear: so thou,  
O Tyranny, beholdest now 280  
Light around thee, and thou hearest  
The loud flames ascend, and fearest:  
Grovel on the earth; ay, hide  
In the dust thy purple pride!

Noon descends around me now:  
'T is the noon of autumn's glow,  
When a soft and purple mist,  
Like a vaporous amethyst,  
Or an air-dissolved star,  
Mingling light and fragrance, far 290  
From the curved horizon's bound  
To the point of heaven's profound,

## Lines Written among Euganean Hills

Fills the overflowing sky;  
And the plains that silent lie  
Underneath; the leaves unsodden  
Where the infant frost has trodden  
With his morning-wingèd feet,  
Whose bright print is gleaming yet;  
And the red and golden vines,  
Piercing with their trellised lines 300  
The rough, dark-skirted wilderness;  
The dun and bladed grass no less,  
Pointing from this hoary tower  
In the windless air; the flower  
Glimmering at my feet; the line  
Of the olive-sandalled Apennine  
In the south dimly islanded;  
And the Alps, whose snows are spread  
High between the clouds and sun;  
And of living things each one; 310  
And my spirit, which so long  
Darkened this swift stream of song,—  
Interpenetrated lie  
By the glory of the sky:  
Be it love, light, harmony,  
Odour, or the soul of all  
Which from heaven like dew doth fall,  
Or the mind which feeds this verse  
Peopling the lone universe.  
Noon descends, and after noon 320  
Autumn's evening meets me soon,  
Leading the infantine moon.  
And that one star, which to her  
Almost seems to minister

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Half the crimson light she brings  
From the sunset's radiant springs:  
And the soft dreams of the morn  
(Which like wingèd winds had borne  
To that silent isle, which lies  
Mid remembered agonies, 330  
The frail bark of this lone being)  
Pass, to other sufferers fleeing,  
And its ancient pilot, Pain,  
Sits beside the helm again.

Other flowering isles must be  
In the sea of life and agony;  
Other spirits float and flee  
O'er that gulf; even now, perhaps,  
On some rock the wild wave wraps,  
With folded winds they waiting sit 340  
For my bark, to pilot it  
To some calm and blooming cove,  
Where for me, and those I love,  
May a windless bower be built,  
Far from passion, pain, and guilt,  
In a dell 'mid lawny hills,  
Which the wild sea-murmur fills,  
And soft sunshine, and the sound  
Of old forests echoing round,  
And the light and smell divine 350  
Of all flowers that breathe and shine:  
—We may live so happy there,  
That the spirits of the air,  
Envyng us, may even entice  
To our healing paradise

## Stanzas Written in Dejection

The polluting multitude;  
But their rage would be subdued  
By that clime divine and calm,  
And the winds whose wings rain balm  
On the uplifted soul, and leaves 360  
Under which the bright sea heaves;  
While each breathless interval  
In their whisperings musical  
The inspired soul supplies  
With its own deep melodies;  
And the love which heals all strife,  
Circling, like the breath of life,  
All things in that sweet abode  
With its own mild brotherhood:  
They, not it, would change; and soon 370  
Every sprite beneath the moon  
Would repent its envy vain,  
And the earth grow young again!

1819.

*Percy Bysshe Shelley.*

!

## STANZAS WRITTEN IN DEJECTION NEAR NAPLES

THE sun is warm, the sky is clear,  
The waves are dancing fast and bright,  
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear  
The purple noon's transparent might:  
The breath of the moist earth is light

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Around its unexpanded buds ;  
Like many a voice of one delight,—  
The winds', the birds', the ocean-floods',—  
The City's voice itself is soft like Solitude's. 9

I see the Deep's untrampled floor  
With green and purple seaweeds strown ;  
I see the waves upon the shore,  
Like light dissolved in star-showers thrown :  
I sit upon the sands alone ;  
The lightning of the noontide ocean  
Is flashing round me, and a tone  
Arises from its measured motion,—  
How sweet, did any heart now share in my  
emotion ! 18

Alas ! I have nor hope nor health,  
Nor peace within nor calm around,  
Nor that Content surpassing wealth  
The sage in meditation found,  
And walked with inward glory crowned,—  
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.  
Others I see whom these surround—  
Smiling they live, and call life pleasure ;—  
To me that cup has been dealt in another  
measure. 27

Yet now despair itself is mild,  
Even as the winds and waters are ;  
I could lie down like a tired child,  
And weep away the life of care  
Which I have borne, and yet must bear,

## The Isles of Greece

Till death like sleep might steal on me,  
And I might feel in the warm air  
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea  
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last  
monotony.

36

Some might lament that I were cold,  
As I, when this sweet day is gone,  
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,  
Insults with this untimely moan;  
They might lament—for I am one  
Whom men love not, - and yet regret,  
Unlike this day, which, when the sun  
Shall on its stainless glory set,  
Will linger, though enjoyed, like joy in  
memory yet

45

1818. 1824.

*Percy Bysshe Shelley.*

## THE ISLES OF GREECE

*From Don Juan*

THE isles of Greece, the isles of Greece!  
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,  
Where grew the arts of war and peace,—  
Where Delos rose, and Phœbus sprung!  
Eternal summer gilds them yet,  
But all, except their sun, is set.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

The Scian and the Teian muse,  
The hero's harp, the lover's lute,  
Have found the fame your shores refuse:  
Their place of birth alone is mute  
To sounds which echo further west  
Than your sires' "Islands of the Blest." 12

The mountains look on Marathon—  
And Marathon looks on the sea;  
And musing there an hour alone,  
I dream'd that Greece might still be free;  
For standing on the Persians' grave,  
I could not deem myself a slave. 18

A king sate on the rocky brow  
Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;  
And ships, by thousands, lay below,  
And men in nations;—all were his!  
He counted them at break of day—  
And when the sun set, where were they? 24

And where are they? and where art thou,  
My country? On thy voiceless shore  
The heroic lay is tuneless now—  
The heroic bosom beats no more!  
And must thy lyre, so long divine,  
Degenerate into hands like mine? 30

'T is something, in the dearth of fame,  
Though link'd among a fetter'd race,  
To feel at least a patriot's shame,  
Even as I sing, suffuse my face;

## The Isles of Greece

For what is left the poet here?  
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear. 36

Must *we* but weep o'er days more blest?  
Must *we* but blush?—Our fathers bled.  
Earth! render back from out thy breast  
A remnant of our Spartan dead!  
Of the three hundred grant but three,  
To make a new Thermopylæ! 42

What, silent still? and silent all?  
Ah! no;—the voices of the dead  
Sound like a distant torrent's fall,  
And answer, "Let one living head,  
But one arise,—we come, we come!"  
'T is but the living who are dumb. 48

In vain—in vain: strike other chords;  
Fill high the cup with Samian wine!  
Leave battles to the Turkish hordes,  
And shed the blood of Scio's vine!  
Hark! rising to the ignoble call—  
How answers each bold Bacchanal! 54

You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet;  
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?  
Of two such lessons, why forget  
The nobler and the manlier one?  
You have the letters Cadmus gave—  
Think ye he meant them for a slave? 60

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!

We will not think of themes like these!

It made Anacreon's song divine;

He served—but served Polycrates—

A tyrant; but our masters then

Were still, at least, our countrymen. 66

The tyrant of the Chersonese

Was freedom's best and bravest friend;

*That* tyrant was Miltiades!

Oh! that the present hour would lend

Another despot of the kind!

Such chains as his were sure to bind. 72

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!

On Suli's rock, and Parga's shore,

Exists the remnant of a line

Such as the Doric mothers bore;

And there, perhaps, some seed is sown,

The Heracleidan blood might own. 78

Trust not for freedom to the Franks—

They have a king who buys and sells;

In native swords and native ranks,

The only hope of courage dwells:

But Turkish force, and Latin fraud,

Would break your shield, however broad. 84

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!

Our virgins dance beneath the shade—

I see their glorious black eyes shine;

But gazing on each glowing maid,

## A Small, Sweet Idyl

My own the burning tear-drop laves,  
To think such breasts must suckle slaves. 90

Place me on Sunium's marbled steep,  
Where nothing, save the waves and I,  
May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;  
There, swan-like, let me sing and die:  
A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine—  
Dash down yon cup of Samian wine! 96

1821.

*Lord Byron.*

## A SMALL, SWEET IDYL

COME down, O maid, from yonder mountain  
height:  
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd  
sang),  
In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?  
But cease to move so near the Heavens, and  
cease  
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted Pine,  
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire;  
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,  
For Love is of the valley, come thou down  
And find him; by the happy threshold, he,  
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,  
Or red with spirted purple of the vats,  
Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk  
With Death and Morning on the silver horns,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,  
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,  
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls  
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors:  
But follow; let the torrent dance thee down  
To find him in the valley; let the wild  
Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave      20  
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill  
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,  
That like a broken purpose waite in air:  
So waste not thou; but come; for all the vales  
Await thee; azure pillars of the hearth  
Arise to thee; the children call, and I  
Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,  
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;  
Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,  
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,      30  
And murmuring of innumerable bees

1847.

*Lord Tennyson.*

## KUBLA KHAN

IN Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran,  
Through caverns measureless to man,  
Down to a sunless sea  
So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round;

## Kubla Khan

And there were gardens, bright with sinuous  
rills,

Where blossomed many an incense-bearing  
tree;

And here were forests ancient as the hills,     10  
Infolding sunny spots of greenery.

But Oh! that deep romantic chasm which  
slanted

Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!

A savage place! as holy and enchanted

As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted

By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil  
seething,

As if this earth in fast thick pants were  
breathing,

A mighty fountain momentarily was forced:

Amid whose swift, half-intermitted burst     20

Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,

Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail;

And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever

It flung up momentarily the sacred river.

Five miles, meandering with a mazy motion

Through wood and dale, the sacred river ran,—

Then reached the caverns measureless to man,

And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:

And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far

Ancestral voices prophesying war.     30

The shadow of the dome of pleasure

Floated midway on the waves;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Where was heard the mingled measure  
From the fountain and the caves.  
It was a miracle of rare device,—  
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!  
A damsel with a dulcimer  
In a vision once I saw ;  
It was an Abyssinian maid,  
And on her dulcimer she played, 40  
Singing of Mount Abora.  
Could I revive within me  
Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight 't would win me  
That, with music loud and long,  
I would build that dome in air,—  
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!  
And all who heard should see them there,  
And all should cry, Beware! beware!  
His flashing eyes, his floating hair! 50  
Weave a circle round him thrice,  
And close your eyes with holy dread,  
For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

1798. 1816.

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge.*

## THE FORGING OF THE ANCHOR

COME, see the Dolphin's anchor forged; 't is at a  
white heat now:  
The bellows ceased, the flames decreased; though  
on the forge's brow

## The Forging of the Anchor

The little flames still fitfully play through the  
sable mound;  
And fitfully you still may see the grim smiths  
ranking round,  
All clad in leathern panoply, their broad hands  
only bare;  
Some rest upon their sledges here, some work  
the windlass there.

The windlass strains the tackle-chains, the black  
mound heaves below.  
And red and deep a hundred veins burst out at  
every throe;  
It rises, roars, rends all outright—O Vulcan,  
what a glow!  
'T is blinding white, 't is blasting bright, the  
high sun shines not so! 19  
The high sun sees not, on the earth, such a fiery,  
fearful show.  
The roof-ribs swarth, the candent hearth, the  
ruddy, lurid row  
Of smiths that stand, an ardent band, like men  
before the foe;  
As, quivering through his fleece of flame, the  
sailing monster, slow  
Sinks on the anvil—all about the faces fiery  
grow—  
“Hurrah!” they shout, “leap out, leap out;”  
bang, bang, the sledges go;  
Hurrah! the jetted lightnings are hissing high  
and low;  
A hailing fount of fire is struck at every squash-  
ing blow;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

The leathern mail rebounds the hail ; the rattling  
cinders strew  
The ground around ; at every bound the swelter-  
ing fountains flow ; 20  
And thick and loud the swinking crowd, at every  
stroke, pant "Ho!"

Leap out, leap out, my masters ; leap out and lay  
on load !  
Let 's forge a goodly anchor, a bower, thick and  
broad ;  
For a heart of oak is hanging on every blow, I  
bode,  
And I see the good ship riding, all in a perilous  
road,—  
The low reef roaring on her lee, the roll of ocean  
poured  
From stem to stern, sea after sea ; the mainmast  
by the board ;  
The bulwarks down, the rudder gone, the boats  
stove at the chains,—  
But courage still, brave mariners, the bower still  
remains,  
And not an inch to flinch he deigns save when ye  
pitch sky-high, 30  
Then moves his head, as though he said, "Fear  
nothing,—here am I!"

Swing in your strokes in order, let foot and hand  
keep time ;  
Your blows make music sweeter far than any  
steeple's chime ;

## The Forging of the Anchor

But while you sling your sledges, sing; and let  
the burden be,  
The Anchor is the Anvil-King, and royal crafts-  
men we!  
Strike in, strike in—the sparks begin to dull their  
rustling red!  
Our hammers ring with sharper din, our work  
will soon be sped:  
Our anchor soon must change his bed of fiery  
rich array  
For a hammock at the roaring bows, or an oozy  
couch of clay;  
Our anchor soon must change the lay of merry  
craftsmen here, 40  
For the Yeo-heave-o', and the Heave-away, and  
the sighing seaman's cheer;  
When, weighing slow, at eve they go—far, far  
from love and home;  
And sobbing sweethearts, in a row, wail o'er the  
ocean foam.

In livid and obdurate gloom, he darkens down at  
last:  
A shapely one he is, and strong as e'er from cat  
'was cast.  
O trusted and trustworthy guard, if thou hadst  
life like me,  
What pleasures would thy toils reward beneath  
the deep green sea!  
O deep Sea-diver, who might then behold such  
sights as thou?  
The hoary monsters' palaces! methinks what joy  
't were now

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

To go plumb plunging down amid the assembly  
of the whales, 50

And feel the churned sea round me boil beneath  
their scourging tails!

Then deep in tangle-woods to fight the fierce sea  
unicorn,

And send him foiled and bellowing back, for all  
his ivory horn;

To leave the subtle sworder-fish of bony blade for-  
lorn;

And for the ghastly-grinning shark, to laugh his  
jaws to scorn;

To leap down on the kraken's back, where 'mid  
Norwegian isles

He lies, a lubber anchorage for sudden shallowed  
miles,

Till snorting, like an under-sea volcano, off he  
rolls;

Meanwhile to swing, a-buffeting the far-aston-  
ished shoals

Of his black-browsing ocean-calves; or, haply in  
a cove, 60

Shell-strewn, and consecrate of old to some Un-  
dinè's love,

To find the long-haired mermaidens; or, hard by  
icy lands,

To wrestle with the Sea-serpent upon cerulean  
sands.

O broad-armed Fisher of the Deep, whose sports  
can equal thine?

## The Forging of the Anchor

The Dolphin weighs a thousand tons that tugs  
thy cable line;  
And night by night 't is thy delight, thy glory  
day by day,  
Through sable sea and breaker white, the giant  
game to play;  
But, shamer of our little sports! forgive the name  
I gave,—  
A fisher's joy is to destroy, thine office is to save.

O lodger in the sea-king's halls, couldst thou but  
understand 70  
Whose be the white bones by thy side, or who  
that dripping band,  
Slow swaying in the heaving waves that round  
about thee bend,  
With sounds like breakers in a dream, blessing  
their ancient friend:  
O, couldst thou know what heroes glide with  
larger steps round thee,  
Thine iron side would swell with pride; thou 'dst  
leap within the sea!

Give honour to their memories who left the pleas-  
ant strand,  
To shed their blood so freely for the love of  
Fatherland,—  
Who left their chance of quiet age and grassy  
churchyard grave,  
So freely for a restless bed amid the tossing  
wave;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Oh, though our Anchor may not be all I have  
fondly sung, 80  
Honour him for their memory, whose bones he  
goes among!

1832.

*Samuel Ferguson.*

## SEAWEED

WHEN descends on the Atlantic  
The gigantic  
Storm-wind of the equinox,  
Landward in his wrath he scourges  
The toiling surges,  
Laden with seaweed from the rocks: 6

From Bermuda's reefs; from edges  
Of sunken ledges,  
In some far-off, bright Azore;  
From Bahama, and the dashing,  
Silver-flashing  
Surges of San Salvador; 12

From the tumbling surf, that buries  
The Orkneyan skerries,  
Answering the hoarse Hebrides;  
And from wrecks of ships, and drifting  
Spars, uplifting  
On the desolate, rainy seas;— 18

Ever drifting, drifting, drifting  
On the shifting

## Seaweed

Currents of the restless main ;  
Till in sheltered coves, and reaches  
Of sandy beaches,  
All have found repose again. 24

So when storms of wild emotion  
Strike the ocean  
Of the poet's soul, erelong  
From each cave and rocky fastness,  
In its vastness,  
Floats some fragment of a song : 30

From the far-off isles enchanted,  
Heaven has planted  
With the golden fruit of Truth ;  
From the flashing surf, whose vision  
Gleams Elysian  
In the tropic clime of Youth ; 36

From the strong Will, and the Endeavor  
That forever  
Wrestles with the tides of Fate ;  
From the wreck of Hopes far-scattered,  
Tempest-shattered,  
Floating waste and desolate :— 42

Ever drifting, drifting, drifting  
On the shifting  
Currents of the restless heart ;  
Till at length in books recorded,  
They, like hoarded  
Household words, no more depart. 48

1844.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.*

## THE CLOUD

I BRING fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,  
From the seas and the streams;  
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid  
In their noonday dreams.  
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken  
The sweet buds every one,  
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,  
As she dances about the sun.  
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,  
And whiten the green plains under; 10  
And then again I dissolve it in rain,  
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,  
And their great pines groan aghast;  
And all the night 't is my pillow white,  
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.  
Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,  
Lightning, my pilot, sits:  
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder;  
It struggles and howls by fits; 20

Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,  
This pilot is guiding me,  
Lured by the love of the genii that move  
In the depths of the purple sea;

## The Cloud

Over the rills and the crags and the hills,  
Over the lakes and plains,  
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,  
The Spirit he loves remains ;  
And I all the while bask in heaven's blue smile,  
Whilst he is dissolving in rains. 30

The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,  
And his burning plumes outspread,  
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,  
When the morning star shines dead,  
As, on the jag of a mountain crag  
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,  
An eagle alit one moment may sit  
In the light of its golden wings.  
And when sunset may breathe, from the lit sea  
beneath,  
Its ardours of rest and of love, 40  
And the crimson pall of eve may fall  
From the depth of heaven above,  
With wings folded I rest on mine airy nest,  
As still as a brooding dove.

That orbèd maiden with white fire laden,  
Whom mortals call the moon,  
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor  
By the midnight breezes strewn ;  
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,  
Which only the angels hear, 50  
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,  
The stars peep behind her and peer ;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,  
Like a swarm of golden bees,  
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,  
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,  
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,  
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the sun's throne with a burning zone,  
And the moon's with a girdle of pearl; 60  
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and  
swim,

When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.  
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,  
Over a torrent sea,

Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,  
The mountains its columns be.  
The triumphal arch through which I march  
With hurricane, fire, and snow,  
When the powers of the air are chained to my  
chair,

Is the millioli-colored bow; 70  
The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,  
While the moist earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of the earth and water,  
And the nursling of the sky:  
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;  
I change, but I cannot die.

For after the rain, when, with never a stain,  
The pavilion of heaven is bare,  
And the winds and sunbeams, with their convex  
gleams,

Build up the blue dome of air,— 80

## The Snow-Storm

I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,  
And out of the caverns of rain,  
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from  
the tomb,  
I rise and unbuild it again.

1820.

*Percy Bysshe Shelley.*

## THE SNOW-STORM

ANNOUNCED by all the trumpets of the sky,  
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,  
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air  
Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,  
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.  
The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet  
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit  
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed  
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come, see the north wind's masonry. 10  
Out of an unseen quarry evermore  
Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer  
Curves his white bastions with projected roof  
Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.  
Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work  
So fanciful, so savage, naught cares he  
For number or proportion. Mockingly,  
On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths;  
A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn;  
Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall, 20  
Maugre the farmer's sighs, and at the gate

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

A tapering turret overtops the work.

And when his hours are numbered, and the  
world

Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,

Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art

To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,

Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work,

The frolic architecture of the snow.

1841.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

## EARLY SPRING

ONCE more the Heavenly Power

Makes all things new,

And domes the red-plow'd hills

With loving blue;

The blackbirds have their wills,

The throats too.

Opens a door in Heaven;

From skies of glass

A Jacob's ladder falls

On greening grass,

And o'er the mountain-walls

Young angels pass.

Before them fleets the shower,

And burst the buds,

And shine the level lands,

And flash the floods;

## Early Spring

The stars are from their hands  
Flung thro' the woods,

18

The woods with living airs  
How softly fann'd,  
Light airs from where the deep,  
All down the sand,  
Is breathing in his sleep,  
Heard by the land.

24

O follow, leaping blood,  
The season's lure!  
O heart, look down and up  
Serene, secure,  
Warm as the crocus cup,  
Like snowdrops, pure!

30

Past, Future glimpse and fade  
Thro' some slight spell,  
A gleam from yonder vale,  
Some far blue fell,  
And sympathies, how frail,  
In sound and smell!

36

Till at thy chuckled note,  
Thou twinkling bird,  
The fairy fancies range,  
And, lightly stirr'd,  
Ring little bells of change  
From word to word.

42

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

For now the Heavenly Power  
Makes all things new,  
And thaws the cold, and fills  
The flower with dew:  
The blackbirds have their wills,  
The poets too.

48

1883.

*Lord Tennyson.*

### RAIN IN SUMMER

How beautiful is the rain!  
After the dust and heat,  
In the broad and fiery street,  
In the narrow lane,  
How beautiful is the rain!

How it clatters along the roofs,  
Like the tramp of hoofs!  
How it gushes and struggles out  
From the throat of the overflowing spout!

Across the window-pane  
It pours and pours;  
And swift and wide,  
With a muddy tide,  
Like a river down the gutter roars  
The rain, the welcome rain!

The sick man from his chamber looks  
At the twisted brooks;

## Rain in Summer

He can feel the cool  
Breath of each little pool;  
His fevered brain 20  
Grows calm again,  
And he breathes a blessing on the rain.

From the neighboring school  
Come the boys,  
With more than their wonted noise  
And commotion;  
And down the wet streets  
Sail their mimic fleets,  
Till the treacherous pool  
Ingulfs them in its whirling 30  
And turbulent ocean.

In the country, on every side,  
Where far and wide,  
Like a leopard's tawny and spotted hide,  
Stretches the plain,  
To the dry grass and the drier grain  
How welcome is the rain!

In the furrowed land  
The toilsome and patient oxen stand;  
Lifting the yoke encumbered head, 40  
With their dilated nostrils spread,  
They silently inhale  
The clover-scented gale,  
And the vapors that arise  
From the well-watered and smoking soil.  
For this rest in the furrow after toil  
Their large and lustrous eyes

## Little Masterpieces of 'English Poetry

Seem to thank the Lord,  
More than man's spoken word.

Near at hand. 50  
From under the sheltering trees,  
The farmer sees  
His pastures, and his fields of grain,  
As they bend their tops  
To the numberless beating drops  
Of the incessant rain  
He counts it as no sin  
That he sees therein  
Only his own thrift and gain

These, and far more than these, 60  
The Poet sees!  
He can behold  
Aquarius old  
Walking the fenceless fields of air;  
And from each ample fold  
Of the clouds about him rolled  
Scattering everywhere  
The showery rain  
As the farmer scatters his grain

He can behold 70  
Things manifold  
That have not yet been wholly told,—  
Have not been wholly sung nor said.  
For his thought, that never stops,  
Follows the water-drops  
Down to the graves of the dead,

## Song of the Brook

Down through chasms and gulfs profound,  
To the dreary fountain-head  
Of lakes and rivers under ground ;  
And sees them, when the rain is done,      80  
On the bridge of colors seven  
Climbing up once more to heaven,  
Opposite the setting sun.

Thus the Seer,  
With vision clear,  
Sees forms appear and disappear,  
In the perpetual round of strange,  
Mysterious change  
From birth to death, from death to birth,  
From earth to heaven, from heaven to  
earth ;      90  
Till glimpses more sublime  
Of things, unseen before,  
Unto his wondering eyes reveal  
The Universe, as an immeasurable wheel  
Turning forevermore  
In the rapid and rushing river of Time.

1845.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.*

## SONG OF THE BROOK

I COME from haunts of coot and hern,  
I make a sudden sally  
And sparkle out among the fern,  
To bicker down a valley.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

By thirty hills I hurry down,  
Or slip between the ridges,  
By twenty thorps, a little town,  
And half a hundred bridges. 8

Till last by Philip's farm I flow  
To join the brimming river,  
For men may come and men may go,  
But I go on forever. 12

I chatter over stony ways,  
In little sharps and trebles,  
I bubble into eddying bays,  
I babble on the pebbles 16

With many a curve my banks I fret  
By many a field and fallow,  
And many a fairy foreland set  
With willow-weed and mallow. 20

I chatter, chatter, as I flow  
To join the brimming river;  
For men may come and men may go,  
But I go on forever. 24

I wind about, and in and out,  
With here a blossom sailing,  
And here and there a lusty trout,  
And here and there a grayling, 28

And here and there a foamy flake  
Upon me, as I travel

## Song of the Brook

With many a silvery waterbreak  
Above the golden gravel, 32

And draw them all along, and flow  
To join the brimming river;  
For men may come and men may go,  
But I go on forever. 36

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,  
I slide by hazel covers;  
I move the sweet forget-me-nots  
That grow for happy lovers 40

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,  
Among my skimming swallows,  
I make the netted sunbeam dance  
Against my sandy shallows 44

I murmur under moon and stars  
In brambly wildernesses,  
I linger by my shingly bars,  
I loiter round my cresses; 48

And out again I curve and flow  
To join the brimming river,  
For men may come and men may go,  
But I go on forever. 52

1855.

*Lord Tennyson.*

## FEBRUARY

Noon—and the north-west sweeps the empty  
road,  
The rain-washed fields from hedge to hedge  
are bare;

Beneath the leafless elms some hind's abode  
Looks small and void, and no smoke meets  
the air  
From its poor hearth: one lonely rook doth  
dare

The gale, and beats above the unseen corn,  
Then turns, and whirling down the wind is  
borne.

7

Shall it not hap that on some dawn of May  
Thou shalt awake, and, thinking of ~~days~~ **days** dead,  
See nothing clear but this same dreary day,  
Of all the days that have passed o'er thine  
head?

Shalt thou not wonder, looking from thy bed,  
Through green leaves on the windless east a-fire,  
That this day too thine heart doth still desire? 14

Shalt thou not wonder that it liveth yet,  
The useless hope, the useless craving pain,

## March

That made thy face, that lonely noontide wet  
With more than beating of the chilly rain?  
Shalt thou not hope for joy new born again,  
Since no grief ever born can ever die  
Through changeless change of seasons passing  
by? 21

## 2

## MARCH

SLAYER of the winter, art thou here again?  
O welcome, thou that bring'st the summer  
nigh!  
The bitter wind makes not thy victory vain,  
Now will we mock thee for thy faint blue  
sky.  
Welcome, O March! whose kindly days  
and dry  
Make April ready for the thristle's song,  
Thou first redresser of the winter's wrong! 7

Yea, welcome, March! and though I die ere  
June,  
Yet for the hope of life I give thee praise,  
Striving to swell the burden of the tune  
That even now I hear thy brown birds raise,  
Unmindful of the past or coming days;  
Who sing: "O joy! a new year is begun:  
What happiness to look upon the sun!" 14

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Ah, what begetteth all this storm of bliss  
But Death himself, who, crying solemnly,  
E'en from the heart of sweet Forgetfulness,  
Bids us "Rejoice! lest pleasureless ye die.  
Within a little time must ye go by.  
Stretch forth your open hands, and, while ye  
live,  
Take all the gifts that Death and Life may  
give"?

21

### 3

## MAY

O LOVE, this morn when the sweet nightingale  
Had so long finished all he had to say,  
That thou hadst slept, and sleep had told his tale;  
And midst a peaceful dream had stolen away  
In fragrant dawning of the first of May,  
Didst thou see aught? didst thou hear voices  
sing  
Ere to the risen sun the bells 'gan ring?

7

For then methought the Lord of Love went by  
To take possession of his flowery throne,  
Ringed round with maids, and youths, and  
minstrelsy;  
A little while I sighed to find him gone,  
A little while the dawning was alone,  
And the light gathered; then I held my breath,  
And shuddered at the sight of Eld and Death.

14

## October

Alas! Love passed me in the twilight dun,  
His music hushed the wakening ousel's song;  
But on these twain shone out the golden sun,  
And o'er their heads the brown bird's tune  
was strong,  
As shivering, twixt the trees they stole along;  
None noted aught their noiseless passing by,  
The world had quite forgotten it must die 21

## 4

## OCTOBER

O LOVE, turn from the unchanging sea, and gaze  
Down these grey slopes upon the year grown  
old,  
A-dying mid the autumn-scented haze.  
That hangeth o'er the hollow in the wold,  
Where the wind-bitten ancient elms infold  
Grey church, long barn, orchard, and red-roofed  
stead,  
Wrought in dead days for men a long while  
dead. 7

Come down, O love; may not our hands still  
meet.  
Since still we live to-day, forgetting June,  
Forgetting May, deeming October sweet—  
—O hearken, hearken! through the afternoon,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

The grey tower sings a strange old tinkling  
tune!

Sweet, sweet, and sad, the toiling year's last  
breath,

Too satiate of life to strive with death. 14

And we too—will it not be soft and kind,

That rest from life, from patience and from  
pain,

That rest from bliss we know not when we find,

That rest from Love which ne'er the end can  
gain?—

—Hark, how the tune swells, that erewhile did  
wane!

Look up, love!—ah, cling close and never move!

How can I have enough of life and love? 21

1868-70.

*William Morris.*

## THE GREEN LINNET

BENEATH these fruit-tree boughs that shed

Their snow-white blossoms on my head,

With brightest sunshine round me spread

Of spring's unclouded weather,

In this sequestered nook how sweet

To sit upon my orchard-seat!

And birds and flowers once more to greet,

My last year's friends together.

## The Green Linnet

One have I marked, the happiest guest  
In all this covert of the blest :

Hail to Thee, far above the rest

    In joy of voice and pinion !

Thou, Linnet ! in thy green array,

Presiding Spirit here to-day,

Dost lead the revels of the May ;

    And this is thy dominion.

16

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,

Make all one band of paramours,

Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,

    Art sole in thy employment :

A Life, a Presence like the Air,

Scattering thy gladness without care,

Too blest with any one to pair ;

    Thyself thy own enjoyment.

24

Amid yon tuft of hazel trees,

That twinkle to the gusty breeze,

Behold him perched in ecstasies,

    Yet seeming still to hover ;

There ! where the flutter of his wings

Upon his back and body flings

Shadows and sunny glimmerings,

    That cover him all over.

32

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,

A Brother of the dancing leaves ;

Then flits, and from the cottage-eaves

    Pours forth his song in gushes ;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

As if by that exulting strain  
He mocked and treated with disdain  
The voiceless Form he chose to feign,  
While fluttering in the bushes. 40

1803. 1807.

*William Wordsworth.*

## THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS

THIS is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,  
Sails the unshadowed main,—  
The venturous bark that flings  
On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings  
In gulfs enchanted, where the siren sings,  
And coral reefs lie bare,  
Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their  
streaming hair. 7

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;  
Wrecked is the ship of pearl!  
And every chambered cell,  
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,  
As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,  
Before thee lies revealed,—  
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt un-  
sealed! 14

Year after year beheld the silent toil  
That spread his lustrous coil;  
Still, as the spiral grew,  
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,

## To a Mountain Daisy

Stole with soft step its shining archway through,  
Built up its idle door,  
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the  
old no more. 21

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by  
thee,  
Child of the wandering sea,  
Cast from her lap forlorn!  
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born  
Than ever Triton blew from wreathèd horn!  
While on mine ear it rings,  
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice  
that sings:— 28

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
As the swift seasons roll!  
Leave thy low-vaulted past!  
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting  
sea! 35

1858.

*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

## TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH IN  
APRIL, 1786

WEE, modest, crimson-tippèd flower,  
Thou 's met me in an evil hour;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

For I maun crush amang the stoure  
Thy slender stem :  
To spare thee now is past my power,  
Thou bonnie gem. 6

Alas ! it 's no thy neebor sweet,  
The bonnie lark, companion meet,  
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,  
Wi' spreckled breast !  
When upward-springing, blithe, to greet  
The purpling east 12

Could blew the bitter-biting north  
Upon thy early, humble birth ;  
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth  
Amid the storm,  
Scarce reared above the parent-earth  
Thy tender form 18

The flaunting flowers our gardens yield,  
High sheltering woods and wa's maun shield ;  
But thou, beneath the random bield  
O' clod or stane,  
Adorns the histie stibble-field,  
Unseen, alane. 24

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,  
Thy snawie bosom sun-ward spread,  
Thou lifts thy unassuming head  
In humble guise ;  
But now the share uptears thy bed,  
And low thou lies ! 30

## To a Mountain Daisy

Such is the fate of artless maid,  
Sweet floweret of the rural shade !  
By love's simplicity betrayed,  
    And guileless trust ;  
Till she, like thee, all soiled, is laid  
    Low i' the dust. 36

Such is the fate of simple Bard,  
On Life's rough ocean luckless starred !  
Unskilful he to note the card  
    Of prudent lore,  
Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,  
    And overwhelm him o'er ! 42

Such fate to suffering Worth is given,  
Who long with wants and woes has striven,  
By human pride or cunning driven  
    To misery's brink ;  
Till, wrenched of every stay but Heaven,  
    He, ruined, sink ! 48

Even thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,  
That fate is thine—no distant date ;  
Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives elate,  
    Full on thy bloom.  
Till crushed beneath the furrow's weight  
    Shall be thy doom ! 54

1786.

*Robert Burns.*

## THE SMALL CELANDINE

THERE is a Flower, the lesser Celandine,  
That shrinks, like many more, from cold and  
rain;  
And, the first moment that the sun may shine,  
Bright as the sun himself, 't is out again! 4

When hailstones have been falling, swarm on  
swarm,  
Or blasts the green field and the trees  
distrest,  
Oft have I seen it muffled up from harm,  
In close self-shelter, like a Thing at rest. 8

But lately, one rough day, this Flower I passed  
And recognised it, though an altered form,  
Now standing forth an offering to the blast,  
And buffeted at will by rain and storm. 12

I stopped, and said with inly-muttered voice,  
"It doth not love the shower, not seek the cold:  
This neither is its courage nor its choice,  
But its necessity in being old. 16

"The sunshine may not cheer it, nor the dew;  
It cannot help itself in its decay;

## The Wild Honeysuckle

Stiff in its members, withered, changed of hue."  
And, in my spleen, I smiled that it was grey. 20

To be a Prodigal's Favourite—then, worse  
truth,  
A Miser's Pensioner—behold our lot!  
O Man, that from thy fair and shining youth  
Age might but take the things Youth needed  
not! 24

1804 1807.

*William Wordsworth.*

## THE WILD HONEYSUCKLE

FAIR FLOWER, that dost so comely grow,  
Hid in this silent, dull retreat,  
Untouched thy honied blossoms blow,  
Unseen thy little branches greet  
No roving foot shall crush thee here,  
No busy hand provoke a tear 6

By Nature's self in white arrayed,  
She bade thee shun the vulgar eye,  
And planted here the guardian shade,  
And sent soft waters murmuring by;  
Thus quietly thy summer goes,  
Thy days declining to repose 12

Smit with those charms, that must decay,  
I grieve to see your future doom;  
They died,—nor were those flowers more gay,  
The flowers that did in Eden bloom;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Unpitying frosts, and Autumn's power  
Shall leave no vestige of this flower. 18

From morning suns and evening dews  
At first thy little being came:  
If nothing once, you nothing lose,  
For when you die you are the same;  
The space between, is but an hour,  
The frail duration of a flower. 24

1786. *Philip Freneau.*

### TO THE FRINGED GENTIAN

THOU blossom bright with autumn dew,  
And colored with the heaven's own blue,  
That openest when the quiet light  
Succeeds the keen and frosty night. 4

Thou comest not when violets lean  
O'er wandering brooks and springs unseen,  
Or columbines, in purple dressed,  
Nod o'er the ground-bird's hidden nest. 8

Thou waitest late and com'st alone,  
When woods are bare and birds are flown,  
And frosts and shortening days portend  
The aged Year is near his end. 12

Then doth thy sweet and quiet eye  
Look through its fringes to the sky,  
Blue—blue—as if that sky let fall  
A flower from its cerulean wall. 16

## The Rhodora

I would that thus, when I shall see  
The hour of death draw near to me,  
Hope, blossoming within my heart,  
May look to heaven as I depart. 20

1832

*William Cullen Bryant.*

## THE RHODORA

ON BEING ASKED, WHENCE IS THE FLOWER

IN May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,  
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,  
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,  
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.  
The purple petals, fallen in the pool,  
Made the black water with their beauty gay;  
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,  
And court the flower that cheapens his array.  
Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why  
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky, 10  
Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,  
Then Beauty is its own excuse for being:  
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!  
I never thought to ask, I never knew:  
But, in my simple ignorance, suppose  
The self-same Power that brought me there  
brought you.

1839.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

## TO THE DANDELION

DEAR common flower, that grow'st beside the  
way,  
Fringing the dusty road with harmless gold,  
First pledge of blithesome May,  
Which children pluck, and, full of pride uphold,  
High-hearted buccaneers, o'erjoyed that they  
An Eldorado in the grass have found,  
Which not the rich earth's ample round  
May match in wealth, thou art more dear to me  
Than all the prouder summer-blooms may be. 9

Gold such as thine ne'er drew the Spanish prow  
Through the primeval hush of Indian seas,  
Nor wrinkled the lean brow  
Of age, to rob the lover's heart of ease;  
'T is the Spring's largess, which she scatters now  
To rich and poor alike, with lavish hand,  
Though most hearts never understand  
To take it at God's value, but pass by  
The offered wealth with unrewarded eye. 18

Thou art my tropics and mine Italy;  
To look at thee unlocks a warmer clime;  
The eyes thou givest me  
Are in the heart, and heed not space or time:  
Not in mid June the golden-cuirassed bee

## To the Dandelion

Feels a more Summer-like warm ravishment  
In the white lily's breezy tent,  
His fragrant Sybaris, than I, when first  
From the dark green thy yellow circles burst 27

Then think I of deep shadows in the grass,  
Of meadows where in sun the cattle graze,  
Where, as the breezes pass,  
The gleaming rushes lean a thousand ways,  
Of leaves that slumber in a cloudy mass,  
Or whiten in the wind, of waters blue  
That from the distance sparkle through  
Some woodland gap, and of a sky above,  
Where one white cloud like a stray lamb doth  
move 36

My childhood's earliest thoughts are linked with  
thee ;  
The sight of thee calls back the robin's song,  
Who, from the dark old tree •  
Beside the door, sang clearly all day long.  
And I, secure in childish piety,  
Listened as if I heard an angel sing  
With news from Heaven, which he could bring  
Fresh every day to my untainted ears  
When birds and flowers and I were happy  
peers 45

How like a prodigal doth nature seem,  
When thou, for all thy gold, so common art !  
Thou teachest me to deem  
More sacredly of every human heart,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Since each reflects in joy its scanty gleam  
Of heaven, and could some wondrous secret  
show,

Did we but pay the love we owe,  
And with a child's undoubting wisdom look  
On all these living pages of God's book 54

1845.

*James Russell Lowell.*

## THE DEATH OF THE FLOWERS

THE melancholy days are come, the saddest of  
the year,  
Of wailing winds, and naked woods, and  
meadows brown and sear.  
Heaped in the hollows of the grove, the autumn  
leaves lie dead;  
They rustle to the eddying gust, and to the rab-  
bit's tread;  
The robin and the wren are flown, and from the  
shrubs the jay,  
And from the wood-top calls the crow through  
all the gloomy day. 6

Where are the flowers, the fair young flowers,  
that lately sprang and stood  
In brighter light and softer airs, a beauteous  
sisterhood?  
Alas! they all are in their graves, the gentle race  
of flowers  
Are lying in their lowly beds, with the fair and  
good of ours.

## The Death of the Flowers

The rain is falling where they lie, but the cold  
November rain  
Calls not from out the gloomy earth the lovely  
ones again 12

The wind-flower and the violet, they perished  
long ago,  
And the brier-rose and the orchis died amid the  
summer glow ;  
But on the hills the golden-rod, and the aster in  
the wood,  
And the yellow sun-flower by the brook in au-  
tumn beauty stood,  
Till fell the frost from the clear cold heaven, as  
falls the plague on men,  
And the brightness of their smile was gone from  
upland, glade, and glen. 13

And now, when comes the calm mild day, as  
still such days will come,  
To call the squirrel and the bee from out their  
winter home ;  
When the sound of dropping nuts is heard,  
though all the trees are still,  
And twinkle in the smoky light the waters of  
the rill,  
The south-wind searches for the flowers whose  
fragrance late he bore,  
And sighs to find them in the wood and by the  
stream no more. 24

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And then I think of one who in her youthful  
beauty died,  
The fair, meek blossom that grew up and faded  
by my side.  
In the cold moist earth we laid her, when the  
forests cast the leaf,  
And we wept that one so lovely should have a  
life so brief:  
Yet not unmeet it was that one, like that young  
friend of ours,  
So gentle and so beautiful, should perish with  
the flowers.

30

1825.

*William Cullen Bryant.*

## OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,  
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical  
shuttle,  
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,  
Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond,  
where the child leaving his bed wandered  
alone, bareheaded, barefoot,  
Down from the showered halo,  
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and  
twisting as if they were alive,  
Out from the patches of briars and blackberries,  
From the memories of the bird that chanted  
to me,

## Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking

From your memories, sad brother, from the fitful  
risings and fallings I heard,  
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and  
swollen as if with tears, 10  
From those beginning notes of yearning and love  
there in the mist,  
From the thousand responses of my heart never  
to cease,  
From the myriad thence-roused words,  
From the word stronger and more delicious than  
any,  
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,  
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,  
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,  
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,  
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the  
waves,  
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and  
hereafter, 20  
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping  
beyond them,  
A reminiscence sing.  
Once Paumanok,  
When the lilac-scent was in the air, and the  
Fifth-month grass was growing,  
Up this seashore in some briers,  
Two feathered guests from Alabama, two  
together, "  
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted  
with brown.  
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at  
hand,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And every day the she-bird crouched on her nest,  
    silent, with bright eyes,  
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close,  
    never disturbing them, 30  
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

“Shine! shine! shine!  
Pour down your warmth, great Sun!  
While we bask, we two together.

“Two together!  
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,  
Day come white, or night come black,  
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,  
Singing all time, minding no time,  
While we two keep together.” 40

Till of a sudden,  
Maybe killed, unknown to her mate,  
One forenoon the she-bird crouched not on the  
    nest,  
Nor returned that afternoon, nor the next,  
Nor ever appeared again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound  
    of the sea,  
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer  
    weather,  
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,  
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,

## Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking

I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the  
he-bird,

The solitary guest from Alabama.

"Blow! blow! blow!

Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;  
I wait and I wait, till you blow my mate to me."

Yes, when the stars glistened,  
All night long on the prong of a moss-scalloped  
stake,

Down almost amid the slapping waves,  
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He called on his mate,  
He poured forth the meanings which I of all men  
know.

Yes, my brother, I know,—

The rest might not, but I have treasured every  
note,

For more than once dimly down to the beach  
gliding,

Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself  
with the shadows,

Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the  
sounds and sights after their sorts,

The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly  
tossing,

I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my  
hair,

Listened long and long.

## **Little Masterpieces of English Poetry**

**Listened to keep, to sing, now translating the  
notes,**

**Following you, my brother.**

70

**"Soothe! soothe! soothe!**

**Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,  
And again another behind embracing and lap-  
ping, every one close,**

**But my love soothes not me, not me**

**"Low hangs the moon; it rose late,  
It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love,  
with love.**

**"O madly the sea pushes upon the land,  
With love, with love.**

**"O night! do I not see my love fluttering out  
among the breakers?  
What is that little black thing I see there in the  
white?"**

80

**"Loud! loud! loud!  
Loud I call to you, my love!  
High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves;  
Surely you must know who is here, is here,  
You must know who I am, my love.**

**"Low-hanging moon!  
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?  
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!  
O moon do not keep her from me any longer.**

## Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking

"Land! land! O land!  
Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give  
me my mate back again if you only would,  
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever  
way I look.

"O rising stars!  
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will  
rise with some of you.

"O throat! O trembling throat!  
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!  
Pierce the woods, the earth;  
Somewhere listening to catch you must be the  
one I want.

"Shake out, carols!  
Solitary here—the night's carols! 100  
Carols of lonesome love! Death's carols!  
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!  
O under that moon where she droops almost  
down into the sea!  
O reckless despairing carols!

"But soft! sink low;  
Soft! let me just murmur;  
And do you wait a moment, you husky-noised  
sea;  
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate re-  
sponding to me,  
So faint—I must be still, to listen;  
But not altogether still, for then she might not  
come immediately to me. 120

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

"Hither, my love!  
Here I am! Here!  
With this just-sustained note I announced myself  
to you;  
This gentle call is for you, my love, for you.

"Do not be decoyed elsewhere!  
That is the whistle of the wind—it is not my  
voice;  
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray;  
Those are the shadows of the leaves

"O darkness! O in vain!  
O I am very sick and sorrowful

120

"O brown halo in the sky near the moon, droop-  
ing upon the sea!  
O troubles reflection in the sea!  
O throat! O throbbing heart!  
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.

"O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!  
In the air, in the woods, over fields,  
Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!  
But my mate no more, no more with me!  
We two together no more"

The aria sinking,  
All else continuing, the stars shining,  
The winds blowing, the notes of the bird con-  
tinuous echoing.

130

## **Out of the Cradle Endlessly Raching**

With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,  
On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling,  
The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the face of the sea almost touching,  
The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his hair the atmosphere dallying,  
The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last tumultuously bursting,  
The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,  
The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,  
The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering, 140  
The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,  
To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd secret hissing,  
To the outseting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul)  
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to me?  
For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard you,  
Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,  
And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer, louder, and more sorrowful than yours,  
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to die.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

O you singers solitary, singing by yourself,  
projecting me, 159

O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease  
perpetuating you,

Never more shall I escape, never more the rever-  
berations,

Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent  
from me,

Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I  
was before what there in the night,

By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,  
The messenger there aroused, the fire, the sweet  
hell within,

The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here  
somewhere)

O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

A word then, (for I will conquer it) 160

The word final, superior to all,

Subtle, sent up—what is it?—I listen;

Are you whispering it, and have been all the time,  
you sea-waves?

Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

Whereto answering, the sea,

Delaying not, hurrying not,

Whispered me through the night, and very  
plainly before daybreak,

Lisped to me the low and delicious word death,

And again death, death, death, death,

## **Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking**

Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like  
my aroused child's heart, 170  
But edging near as privately for me, rustling at  
my feet,  
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving  
me softly all over,  
Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,  
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and  
brother,  
That he sang to me in the moonlight on  
Paumanok's gray beach,  
With the thousand responsive songs at random,  
My own songs awaked from that hour,  
And with them the key, the word up from the  
waves,  
The word of the sweetest song and all songs, 180  
That strong and delicious word which, creeping  
to my feet,  
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle,  
swathed in sweet garments, bending aside)  
The sea whispered me.

1871.

*Walt Whitman.*



## PORTRAITS OF PEOPLE



## THE MEN OF OLD

I know not that the men of old  
Were better than men now,  
Of heart more kind, of hand more bold,  
Of more ingenuous brow :  
I heed not those who pine for force  
A ghost of Time to raise,  
As if they thus could check the course  
Of these appointed days. 8

Still it is true, and over-true,  
That I delight to close  
This book of life self-wise and new,  
And let my thoughts repose  
On all that humble happiness,  
The world has since foregone,—  
The daylight of contentedness  
That on those faces shone ! 16

With rights, though not too closely scanned,  
Enjoyed, as far as known,—  
With will by no reverse unmanned,—  
With pulse of even tone,—  
They from to-day and from to-night  
Expected nothing more,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Than yesterday and yesternight  
Had proffered them before. 24

To them was life a simple art  
Of duties to be done,  
A game where each man took his part,  
A race where all must run;  
A battle whose great scheme and scope  
They little cared to know,  
Content, as men at arms, to cope  
Each with his fronting foe. 32

Man *now* his Virtue's diadem  
Puts on and proudly wears,  
Great thoughts, great feelings, came to them,  
Like instincts, unawares:  
Blending their souls' sublimest needs  
With tasks of every day,  
They went about their gravest deeds,  
As noble boys at play.—

And what if Nature's fearful wound  
They did not probe and bare,  
For that their spirits never swooned  
To watch the misery there,—  
For that their love but flowed more fast,  
Their charities more free,  
Not conscious what mere drops they cast  
Into the evil sea. 48

A man's best things are nearest him,  
Lie close about his feet;

## The Lotos-Eaters

It is the distant and the dim  
That we are sick to greet;  
For flowers that grow our hands beneath  
We struggle and aspire,—  
Our hearts must die, except they breathe  
The air of fresh Desire. 56

Yet, Brothers, who up Reason's hill  
Advance with hopeful cheer,—  
Oh! loiter not, those heights are chill,  
As chill as they are clear;  
And still restrain your haughty gaze,  
The loftier that ye go,  
Remembering distance leaves a haze  
On all that lies below. 64

1838. *Richard Monckton Milnes, Lord Houghton.*

## THE LOTOS-EATERS

"COURAGE!" he said, and pointed toward the  
land,  
"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward  
soon."  
In the afternoon they came unto a land  
In which it seemed always afternoon.  
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,  
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.  
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;  
And, like a downward smoke, the slender  
stream  
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did  
seem.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

A land of streams! some, like a downward  
smoke, 10

Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;  
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows  
broke,

Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.  
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow  
From the inner land; far off, three mountain-  
tops,

Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,  
Stood sunset-flush'd; and, dew'd with showery  
drops,

Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven  
copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown  
In the red West; thro' mountain clefts the  
dale 20

Was seen far inland, and the yellow down  
Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale  
And meadow, set with slender galingale;  
A land where all things always seem'd the  
same!

And round about the keel with faces pale,  
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,  
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,  
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they  
gave

To each, but whoso did receive of them, 30  
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave

## The Lotos-Eaters

Far, far away did seem to mourn and rave  
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,  
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;  
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,  
And music in his ears his beating heart did  
make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,  
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;  
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,  
Of child, and wife and slave; but evermore 4\*  
Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,  
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.  
Then some one said, "We will return no  
more;"  
And all at once they sang, "Our island home  
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer  
roam."

### CHORIC SONG

#### I

THERE is sweet music here that softer falls  
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,  
Or night-dews on still waters between walls  
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;  
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies, 5\*  
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes;  
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the  
blissful skies.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Here are cool mosses deep,  
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,  
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers  
    weep,  
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs  
    in sleep.

### II

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,  
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,  
While all things else have rest from  
    weariness?  
All things have rest: why should we toil  
    alone? 60  
We only toil, who are the first of things,  
And make perpetual moan,  
Still from one sorrow to another thrown:  
Nor ever fold our wings,  
And cease from wanderings,  
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;  
Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,  
'There is no joy but calm!'—  
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown  
    of things?

### III

Lo! in the middle of the wood, 70  
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud  
With winds upon the branch, and there  
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,

## The Lotos-Eaters

Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon  
Nightly dew-fed, and turning yellow  
Falls, and floats adown the air.  
Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,  
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,  
Drops in a silent autumn night  
All its allotted length of days, 80  
The flower ripens in its place,  
Ripens and fades, and falls and hath no toil,  
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil

### IV

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,  
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.  
Death is the end of life; ah, why  
Should life all labour be?  
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,  
And in a little while our lips are dumb.  
Let us alone. What is it that will last? 90  
All things are taken from us, and become  
Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.  
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have  
To war with evil? Is there any peace  
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?  
All things have rest, and ripen toward the  
grave  
In silence; ripen, fall, and cease:  
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or  
dreamful ease.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

### V

How sweet it were, hearing the downward  
stream,  
With half-shut eyes ever to seem 100  
Falling asleep in a half-dream!  
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,  
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the  
height;  
To hear each other's whisper'd speech;  
Eating the Lotos day by day,  
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,  
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;  
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly  
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;  
To muse and brood and live again in 110  
memory,  
With those old faces of our infancy  
Heap'd over with a mound of grass,  
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn  
of brass!

### VI

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,  
And dear the last embraces of our wives  
And their warm tears; but all hath suffer'd  
change;  
For surely now our household hearths are cold,  
Our sons inherit us, our looks are strange,

## The Lotos-Eaters

And we should come like ghosts to trouble  
joy.

Or else the island princes over-bold 120  
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings  
Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,  
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten  
things.

Is there confusion in the little isle?

Let what is broken so remain.

The Gods are hard to reconcile;

'T is hard to settle order once again.

There is confusion worse than death,

Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,

Long labour unto aged breath, 130

Sore tasks to hearts worn out by many wars

And eyes grown dim with gazing on the  
pilot-stars.

### VII

But propt on beds of amaranth and moly,

How sweet—while warm airs lull us, blowing  
lowly—

With half-dropped eyelid still,

Beneath a heaven dark and holy,

To watch the long bright river drawing  
slowly

His waters from the purple hill—

To hear the dewy echoes calling

From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined  
vine— 140

To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Thro' many a woven acanthus-wreath divine!  
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling  
    brine,  
Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath  
    the pine.

### VIII

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak,  
The Lotos blows by every winding creek;  
All day the wind breathes low with mellow  
    tone;  
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone  
Round and round the spicy downs the  
    yellow Lotus-dust is blown.  
We have had enough of action, and of  
    motion we, 150  
Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when  
    the surge was seething free,  
Where the wallowing monster spouted his  
    foam-fountains in the sea.  
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal  
    mind,  
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie  
    reclined  
On the hills like Gods together, careless of  
    mankind.  
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts  
    are hurl'd  
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds  
    are lightly curl'd  
Round their golden houses, girdled with the  
    gleaming world;

## The Lotos-Eaters

Where they smile in secret, looking over  
wasted lands,  
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake,  
roaring deeps and fiery sands, 160  
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sink-  
ing ships, and praying hands.  
But they smile, they find a music centred in  
a doleful song  
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale  
of wrong.  
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words  
are strong;  
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that  
cleave the soil,  
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with  
enduring toil,  
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine  
and oil;  
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 't is  
whisper'd—down in hell.  
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian  
valleys dwell,  
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of  
asphodel. 170  
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than  
toil, the shore  
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and  
wave and oar;  
Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not  
wander more.

1833.

*Lord Tennyson.*

## THE SOWER

I SAW a Sower walking slow  
Across the earth, from east to west ;  
His hair was white as mountain snow,  
His head drooped forward on his breast. 4

With shrivelled hands he flung his seed,  
Nor ever turned to look behind ;  
Of sight or sound he took no heed ;  
It seemed he was both deaf and blind. 8

His dim face showed no soul beneath,  
Yet in my heart I felt a stir,  
As if I looked upon the sheath,  
That once had held Excalibur. 12

I heard, as still the seed he cast,  
How, crooning to himself, he sung,  
"I sow again the holy Past,  
The happy days when I was young. 16

"Then all was wheat without a tare,  
Then all was righteous, fair, and true ;  
And I am he whose thoughtful care  
Shall plant the Old World in the New. 20

## The Sower

"The fruitful germs I scatter free,  
With busy hand, while all men sleep;  
In Europe now, from sea to sea,  
The nations bless me as they reap." 24

Then I looked back along his path,  
And heard the clash of steel on steel,  
Where man faced man, in deadly wrath,  
While clanged the tocsin's hurrying peal 28

The sky with burning towns flared red,  
Nearer the noise of fighting rolled,  
And brother's blood, by brothers shed,  
Crept curdling over pavements cold. 32

Then marked I how each germ of truth  
Which through the dotard's fingers ran  
Was mated with a dragon's tooth  
Whence there sprang up an armed man. 36

I shouted, but he could not hear;  
Made signs, but these he could not see;  
And still, without a doubt or fear,  
Broadcast he scattered anarchy. 40

Long to my straining ears the blast  
Brought faintly back the words he sung:  
I sow again the holy Past,  
The happy days when I was young." 44

*Ed.*

*James Russell Lowell.*

## ROBIN HOOD

No! those days are gone away,  
And their hours are old and gray,  
And their minutes buried all  
Under the down-trodden pall  
Of the leaves of many years:  
Many times have Winter's shears,  
Frozen North, and chilling East,  
Sounded tempests to the feast  
Of the forest's whispering fleeces,  
Since men knew nor rent nor leases. 10

No, the bugle sounds no more,  
And the twanging bow no more;  
Silent is the ivory shrill  
Past the heath and up the hill;  
There is no mid-forest laugh,  
Where lone Echo gives the half  
To some wight, amaz'd to hear  
Jesting, deep in forest drear. 18

On the fairest time of June  
You may go, with sun or moon,  
Or the seven stars to light you,  
Or the polar ray to right you;

## . Robin Hood

But you never may behold  
Little John, or Robin bold;  
Never one, of all the clan,  
Thrumming on an empty can  
Some old hunting ditty, while  
He doth his green way beguile  
To fair hostess Merriment,  
Down beside the pasture Trent;  
For he left the merry tale,  
Messenger for spicy ale.

32

Gone, the merry morris din;  
Gone, the song of Gamelyn;  
Gone, the tough-belted outlaw  
Idling in the "grenè shawe;"  
All are gone away and past!  
And if Robin should be cast  
Sudden from his turfèd grave  
And if Marian should have  
Once again her forest days,  
She would weep, and he would craze:  
He would swear, for all his oaks,  
Fall'n beneath the dock-yard strokes,  
Have rotted on the briny seas;  
She would weep that her wild bees  
Sang not to her—strange! that honey  
Can't be got without hard money!

48

So it is; yet let us sing  
Honour to the old bow-string!  
Honour to the bugle-horn!  
Honour to the woods unshorn!

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Honour to the Lincoln green!  
Honour to the archer keen!  
Honour to tight Little John,  
And the horse he rode upon!  
Honour to bold Robin Hood,  
Sleeping in the underwood!  
Honour to Maid Marian,  
And to all the Sherwood-clan!  
Though their days have hurried by,  
Let us two a burden try.

62

1818. 1820.

*John Keats.*



## TO WORDSWORTH

THOSE who have laid the harp aside  
And turn'd to idler things,  
From very restlessness have tried  
The loose and dusty strings,  
And, catching back some favourite strain,  
Run with it o'er the chords again.

But Memory is not a Muse,  
O Wordsworth! though 't is said  
They all descend from her, and use  
To haunt her fountain-head:  
That other men should work for me  
In the rich mines of Poesie,

Pleases me better than the toil  
Of smoothing under hardened hand,

## To Wordsworth

With attic emery and oil,  
The shining point for Wisdom's wand,  
Like those thou temperest 'mid the rills  
Descending from thy native hills.  
Without his governance, in vain  
Manhood is strong, and Youth is bold. 20

If oftentimes the o'er-piled strain  
Clogs in the furnace, and grows cold  
Beneath his pinions deep and froze,  
And swells and melts and flows no more,  
That is because the heat beneath  
Pants in its cavern poorly fed.  
Life springs not from the couch of Death,  
Nor Muse nor Grace can raise the dead;  
Unturn'd then let the mass remain,  
Intractable to sun or rain. 30

A marsh, where only flat leaves lie,  
And showing but the broken sky,  
Too surely is the sweetest lay  
That wins the ear and wastes the day,  
Where youthful Fancy pouts alone  
And lets not Wisdom touch her zone.

He who would build his fame up high,  
The rule and plummet must apply,  
Nor say, "I 'll do what I have plann'd,"  
Before he try if loam or sand 40  
Be still remaining in the place  
Delved for each polished pillar's base.  
With skilful eye and fit device

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Thou raisest every edifice,  
Whether in sheltered vale it stand,  
Or overlook the Dardan strand,  
Amid the cypresses that mourn  
Laodameia's love forlorn.

We both have run o'er half the space  
Listed for mortal's earthly race,                    50  
We both have crossed life's fervid line,  
And other stars before us shine  
May they be bright and prosperous  
As those that have been stars for us!  
Our course by Milton's light was sped,  
And Shakespeare shining overhead  
Chatting on deck was Dryden too,  
The Bacon of the rhyming crew;  
None ever cross'd our mystic sea  
More richly stored with thought than he;                    60  
Tho' never tender nor sublime,  
He wrestles with and conquers Time  
To learn my lore on Chaucer's knee,  
I left much prouder company,  
Thee gentle Spenser fondly led,  
But me he mostly sent to bed

I wish them every joy above  
That highly blessed spirits prove,  
Save one and that too shall be theirs,  
But after many rolling years,                    70  
When 'mid their light thy light appears

1833 1837.

Walter Savage Landor. \*

## MEMORABILIA

And did you once see Shelley plain,  
And did he stop and speak to you,  
And did you speak to him again?  
How strange it seems and new! 4

But you were living before that,  
And also you were living after;  
And the memory I started at—  
My starting moves your laughter! 8

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own  
And a certain use in the world no doubt,  
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone  
'Mid the blank miles round about: 12

For there I picked up on the heather  
And there I put inside my breast  
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!  
Well, I forget the rest. 16

1855.

*Robert Browning.*

## TO ROBERT BROWNING

THERE is delight in singing, tho' none hear  
Beside the singer; and there is delight  
In praising, tho' the praiser sit alone  
And see the prais'd far off him, far above.

## True Masterpieces of English Poetry

Shakespeare is not our poet, but the world's,  
Therefore on him no speech! and brief for  
thee,

Browning! Since Chaucer was alive and hale  
No man hath walked along our roads with  
step

So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue  
So varied in discourse. But warmer climes  
Give brighter plumage, stronger wing: the  
breeze

Of Alpine heights thou playest with, borne on  
Beyond Sorrento and Amalfi, where

The Siren waits thee, singing song for song

1846.

*Walter Savage Landor.*

## ON A BUST OF DANTE

SEE, from this counterfeit of him  
Whom Arno shall remember long,  
How stern of lineament, how grim,  
The father was of Tuscan song:  
There but the burning sense of wrong,  
Perpetual care and scorn, abide;  
Small friendship for the lordly throng;  
Distrust of all the world beside.

Faithful if this wan image be,  
No dream his life was,—but a fight!  
Could any Beatrice see  
A lover in that anchorite?  
To that cold Ghibelline's gloomy sight

## On a Bust of Dante

Who could have guessed the visions  
came  
Of Beauty, veiled with heavenly light,  
In circles of eternal flame? 16

The lips as Cumæ's cavern close,  
The cheeks with fast and sorrow thin,  
The rigid front, almost morose,  
But for the patient hope within,  
Declare a life whose course hath been  
Unsullied still, though still severe,  
Which, through the wavering days of sin,  
Kept itself icy-chaste and clear. 24

Not wholly such his haggard look  
When wandering once, forlorn, he strayed,  
With no companions save his book,  
To Corvo's hushed monastic shade;  
Where, as the Benedictine laid  
His palm upon the convent's guest,  
The single boon for which he prayed  
Was peace, that pilgrim's one request. 32

Peace dwells not here,—this rugged face  
Betrays no spirit of repose;  
The sullen warrior sole we trace,  
The marble man of many woes.  
Such was his mien when first arose  
The thought of that strange tale divine  
When hell he peopled with his foes,  
Dread scourge of many a guilty line. 40

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

War to the last he waged with all  
The tyrant canker-worms of earth;  
Baron and duke, in hold and hall,  
Cursed the dark hour that gave him birth;  
He used Rome's harlot for his mirth;  
Plucked bare hypocrisy and crime;  
But valiant souls of knightly worth  
Transmitted to the rolls of Time. 48

O Time! whose verdicts mock our own,  
The only righteous judge art thou;  
That poor old exile, sad and lone,  
Is Latium's other Virgil now:  
Before his name the nations bow;  
His words are parcel of mankind,  
Deep in whose hearts, as on his brow,  
The marks have sunk of Dante's mind. 56

1841.

*Thomas William Parsons.*

## ICHABOD

DANIEL WEBSTER, 1850

So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn  
Which once he wore!  
The glory from his gray hairs gone  
Forevermore!

Revile him not, the Tempter hath  
A snare for all;

## Ichabod

And pitying tears, not scorn and wrath,  
Befit his fall! 8

Oh, dumb be passion's stormy rage,  
When he who might  
Have lighted up and led his age,  
Falls back in night 12

Scorn! would the angels laugh, to mark  
A bright soul driven,  
Fiend-goaded, down the endless dark,  
From hope and heaven! 16

Let not the land once proud of him  
Insult him now,  
Nor brand with deeper shame his dim,  
Dishonored brow 20

But let its humbled sons, instead,  
From sea to lake,  
A long lament, as for the dead,  
In sadness make 24

Of all we loved and honored, naught  
Save power remains,  
A fallen angel's pride of thought,  
Still strong in chains 28

All else is gone, from those great eyes  
The soul has fled  
When faith is lost, when honor dies,  
The man is dead! 32

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Then, pay the reverence of old days  
To his dead fame;  
Walk backward, with averted gaze,  
And hide the shame!

36

1850.

*John Greenleaf Whittier.*

### THERE WAS A BOY

THERE was a Boy; ye knew him well, ye cliffs  
And islands of Winander!—many a time,  
At evening, when the earliest stars began  
To move along the edges of the hills,  
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,  
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake;  
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands  
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth  
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,  
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls, 10  
That they might answer him.—And they would  
shout

Across the watery vale, and shout again,  
Responsive to his call,—with quivering peals,  
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud  
Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild  
Of jocund din! And, when there came a pause  
Of silence such as baffled his best skill:  
Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung  
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise  
Has carried far into his heart the voice 20  
Of mountain-torrents; or the visible scene  
Would enter unawares into his mind

## Ruth

With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,  
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received  
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This boy was taken from his mates, and died  
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.  
Preëminent in beauty is the vale

Where he was born and bred: the churchyard  
hangs

Upon a slope above the village-school;      30  
And through that church-yard when my way  
has led

On summer-evenings, I believe, that there  
A long half-hour together I have stood  
Mute—looking at the grave in which he lies!

1800.

*William Wordsworth.*

## RUTH

SHE stood breast high amid the corn  
Clasp'd by the golden light of morn,  
Like the sweetheart of the sun,  
Who many a glowing kiss had won.      4

On her cheek an autumn flush,  
Deeply ripen'd;—such a blush  
In the midst of brown was born,  
Like red poppies grown with corn.      8

Round her eyes her tresses fell,  
Which were blackest none could tell,  
But long lashes veil'd a light,  
That had else been all too bright.      12

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And her hat, with shady brim,  
Made her tressy forehead dim ;—  
Thus she stood amid the stooks,  
Praising God with sweetest looks :— 16

Sure, I said, Heav'n did not mean,  
Where I reap thou shouldst but glean,  
Lay thy sheaf adown and come,  
Share my harvest and my home. 20

1827.

Thomas Hood.

## STEPPING WESTWARD

" *What, you are stepping westward?* "

—" *Yea.* "

—'T would be a *wildish* destiny,  
If we, who thus together roam  
In a strange Land, and far from home,  
Were in this place the guests of Chance :  
Yet who would stop, or fear to advance  
Though home or shelter he had none,  
With such a sky to lead him on? 8

The dewy ground was dark and cold ;  
Behind, all gloomy to behold ;  
And stepping westward seemed to be  
A kind of *heavenly* destiny :  
I liked the greeting ; 't was a sound  
Of something without place or bound ;  
And seemed to give me spiritual right  
To travel through that region bright. 16

## **“ She was a Phantom of Delight.”**

The voice was soft, and she who spake  
Was walking by her native lake:  
The salutation had to me  
The very sound of courtesy:  
Its power was felt; and while my eye  
Was fixed upon the glowing Sky,  
The echo of the voice enwrought  
A human sweetness with the thought  
Of traveling through the world that lay  
Before me in my endless way. 26

1803. 1807.

*William Wordsworth.*

## **“ SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT ”**

SHE was a Phantom of delight  
When first she gleamed upon my sight;  
A lovely Apparition sent  
To be a moment's ornament;  
Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair;  
Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair;  
But all things else about her drawn  
From May-time and the cheerful Dawn;  
A dancing Shape, an Image gay,  
To haunt, to startle, and way-lay. 10

I saw her upon nearer view,  
A Spirit, yet a Woman too!  
Her household motions light and free,  
And steps of virgin-liberty;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

A countenance in which did meet  
Sweet records, promises as sweet;  
A Creature not too bright or good  
For human nature's daily food;  
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,  
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and  
smiles.

20

And now I see with eye serene  
The very pulse of the machine;  
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,  
A Traveller between life and death;  
The reason firm, the temperate will,  
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;  
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,  
To warn, to comfort, and command;  
And yet a Spirit still, and bright  
With something of angelic light.

30

1804. 1807.

*William Wordsworth.*

## THE SOLITARY REAPER

BEHOLD her, single in the field,  
Yon solitary Highland Lass!  
Reaping and singing by herself;  
Stop here, or gently pass!  
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,  
And sings a melancholy strain;  
O listen! for the Vale profound  
Is overflowing with the sound.

## The Solitary Reaper

No Nightingale did ever chaunt  
More welcome notes to weary bands  
Of travellers in some shady haunt,  
Among Arabian sands:  
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard  
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,  
Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides. 16

Will no one tell me what she sings?—  
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
And battles long ago:  
Or is it some more humble lay,  
Familiar matter of to-day?  
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,  
That has been, and may be again? 24

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang  
As if her song could have no ending;  
I saw her singing at her work,  
And o'er the sickle bending;—  
I listened, motionless and still;  
And, as I mounted up the hill  
The music in my heart I bore,  
Long after it was heard no more. 32

1803. 1807.

*William Wordsworth.*

## MARIANA

With blackest moss the flower-plots  
Were thickly crusted, one and all:  
The rusted nails fell from the knots  
That held the pear to the gable-wall.  
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:  
Unlifted was the clinking latch;  
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch  
Upon the lonely moated grange.  
She only said, "My life is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said;  
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!"

12

Her tears fell with the dews at even;  
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;  
She could not look on the sweet heaven,  
Either at morn or eventide.  
After the flitting of the bats,  
When thickest dark did trance the sky,  
She drew her casement-curtain by,  
And glanced athwart the glooming flats.  
She only said, "The night is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said;  
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!"

24

## Mariana

Upon the middle of the night,  
Waking she heard the night-fowl crow :  
The cock sung out an hour ere light :  
From the dark fen the oxen's low  
Came to her : without hope of change,  
In sleep she seem'd to walk forlorn,  
Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn  
About the lonely moated grange.  
She only said, "The day is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said ;  
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!"

36

About a stone-cast from the wall  
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,  
And o'er it many, round and small,  
The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.  
Hard by a poplar shook alway,  
All silver-green with gnarl'd bark :  
For leagues no other tree did mark  
The level waste, the rounding gray.  
She only said, "My life is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said ;  
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!"

48

And ever when the moon was low.  
And the shrill winds were up and away,  
In the white curtain, to and fro,  
She saw the gusty shadow sway.  
But when the moon was very low,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And wild winds bound within their cell,  
The shadow of the poplar fell  
Upon her bed, across her brow.

She only said, "The night is dreary,

He cometh not," she said;

She said, "I am aweary, aweary,

I would that I were dead!"

60

All day within the dreamy house,

The doors upon their hinges creak'd;

The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse

Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,

Or from the crevice peer'd about.

Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors,

Old footsteps trod the upper floors,

Old voices call'd her from without.

She only said, "My life is dreary,

He cometh not," she said;

She said, "I am aweary, aweary,

I would that I were dead!"

72

The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,

The slow clock ticking, and the sound

Which to the wooing wind aloof

The poplar made, did all confound

Her sense; but most she loathed the hour

When the thick-moted sunbeam lay

Athwart the chambers, and the day

Was sloping toward his western bower.

Then, said she, "I am very dreary,

He will not come," she said;

She wept, "I am aweary, aweary,

O God, that I were dead!"

84

## THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH

UNDER a spreading chestnut-tree  
The village smithy stands ;  
The smith, a mighty man is he,  
With large and sinewy hands ;  
And the muscles of his brawny arms  
Are strong as iron bands. 6

His hair is crisp, and black, and long,  
His face is like the tan ;  
His brow is wet with honest sweat,  
He earns whate'er he can,  
And looks the whole world in the face,  
For he owes not any man. 12

Week in, week out, from morn till night,  
You can hear his bellows blow ;  
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,  
With measured beat and slow,  
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,  
When the evening sun is low. 18

And children coming home from school  
Look in at the open door ;  
They love to see the flaming forge,  
And hear the bellows roar,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And catch the burning sparks that fly  
Like chaff from the threshing-floor. 24

He goes on Sunday to the church,  
And sits among his boys;  
He hears the parson pray and preach,  
He hears his daughter's voice,  
Singing in the village choir,  
And it makes his heart rejoice. 30

It sounds to him like her mother's voice,  
Singing in Paradise!  
He needs must think of her once more,  
How in the grave she lies;  
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes  
A tear out of his eyes. 36

Toiling,—rejoicing,—sorrowing,  
Onward through life he goes;  
Each morning sees some task begin,  
Each evening sees it close;  
Something attempted, something done,  
Has earned a night's repose. 42

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,  
For the lesson thou hast taught!  
Thus at the flaming forge of life  
Our fortunes must be wrought;  
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped  
Each burning deed and thought! 48

1840.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.*

## THE LAST LEAF

I saw him once before,  
As he passed by the door,  
And again  
The pavement stones resound,  
As he totters o'er the ground  
With his cane.

They say that in his prime,  
Ere the pruning-knife of Time  
Cut him down,  
Not a better man was found  
By the Crier on his round  
Through the town.

12

But now\*he walks the streets,  
And he looks at all he meets  
Sad and wan,  
And he shakes his feeble head,  
That it seems as if he said,  
"They are gone."

18

The mossy marbles rest  
On the lips that he has prest  
In their bloom,



## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And the names he loved to hear  
Have been carved for many a year  
On the tomb. 24

My grandmamma has said—  
Poor old lady; she is dead  
Long ago—  
That he had a Roman nose,  
And his cheek was like a rose  
In the snow. 30

But now his nose is thin,  
And it rests upon his chin  
Like a staff,  
And a crook is in his back,  
And a melancholy crack  
In his laugh. 36

I know it is a sin  
For me to sit and grin  
At him here;  
But the old three-cornered hat,  
And the breeches, and all that,  
Are so queer! 42

And if I should live to be  
The last leaf upon the tree  
In the spring,  
Let them smile, as I do now,  
At the old forsaken bough  
Where I cling. 48

## THE BAREFOOT BOY

BLESSINGS on thee, little man,  
Barefoot boy, with cheek of tan!  
With thy turned-up pantaloons,  
And thy merry whistled tunes;  
With thy red lip, redder still  
Kissed by strawberries on the hill;  
With the sunshine on thy face,  
Through thy torn brim's jaunty grace;  
From my heart I give thee joy,—  
I was once a barefoot boy!  
Prince thou art,—the grown-up man  
Only is republican.  
Let the million-dollared ride!  
Barefoot, trudging at his side,  
Thou hast more than he can buy  
In the reach of ear and eye,—  
Outward sunshine, inward joy:  
Blessings on thee, barefoot boy!

Oh, for boyhood's painless play,  
Sleep that wakes in laughing day,  
Health that mocks the doctor's rules,  
Knowledge never learned of schools,  
Of the wild bee's morning chase,  
Of the wild-flower's time and place,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Flight of fowl and habitude  
Of the tenants of the wood;  
How the tortoise<sup>a</sup> bears his shell,  
How the woodchuck digs his cell,  
And the ground-mole sinks his well;  
How the robin feeds her young,                    30  
How the oriole's nest is hung;  
Where the whitest lilies blow,  
Where the freshest berries grow,  
Where the ground-nut trails its vine,  
Where the wood-grape's clusters shine;  
Of the black wasp's cunning way,  
Mason of his walls of clay,  
And the architectural plans  
Of gray hornet artisans!  
For, eschewing books and tasks,                    40  
Nature answers all he asks;  
Hand in hand with her he walks,  
Face to face with her he talks,  
Part and parcel of her joy,—  
Blessings on the barefoot boy!

Oh, for boyhood's time of June,  
Crowding years in one brief moon,  
When all things I heard or saw,  
Me, their master, waited for.  
I was rich in flowers and trees,                    50  
Humming-birds and honey-bees;  
For my sport the squirrel played,  
Plied the snouted mole his spade;  
For my taste the blackberry cone  
Purpled over hedge and stone;

## The Barefoot Boy

Laughed the brook for my delight  
Through the day and through the night,  
Whispering at the garden wall,  
Talked with me from fall to fall;  
Mine the sand-rimmed pickerel pond, 60  
Mine the walnut slopes beyond,  
Mine, on bending orchard trees,  
Apples of Hesperides!  
Still as my horizon grew,  
Larger grew my riches too;  
All the world I saw or knew  
Seemed a complex Chinese toy,  
Fashioned for a barefoot boy!

Oh, for festal dainties spread,  
Like my bowl of milk and bread; 70  
Pewter spoon and bowl of wood,  
On the door-stone, gray and rude!  
O'er me, like a regal tent,  
Cloudy-ribbed, the sunset bent,  
Purple-curtained, fringed with gold,  
Looped in many a wind-swung fold;  
While for music came the play  
Of the pied frogs' orchestra;  
And, to light the noisy choir,  
Lit the fly his lamp of fire. 80  
I was monarch. pomp and joy  
Waited on the barefoot boy!

Cheerly, then, my little man,  
Live and laugh, as boyhood can!

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Though the flinty slopes be hard,  
Stubble-speared the new-mown sward,  
Every morn shall lead thee through  
Fresh baptisms of the dew ;  
Every evening from thy feet  
Shall the cool wind kiss the heat : 90  
All too soon these feet must hide  
In the prison cells of pride,  
Lose the freedom of the sod,  
Like a colt's for work be shod,  
Made to tread the mills of toil,  
Up and down in ceaseless moil :  
Happy if their track be found  
Never on forbidden ground ;  
Happy if they sink not in  
Quick and treacherous sands of sin. 100  
Ah ! that thou couldst know thy joy,  
Ere it passes, barefoot boy !

1855.

*John Greenleaf Whittier.*

## POEMS IN CHARACTER



## ULYSSES

It little profits that an idle king,  
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,  
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole  
Unequal laws unto a savage race,  
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.  
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink  
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd  
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those  
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when  
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades 10  
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;  
For always roaming with a hungry heart  
Much have I seen and known: cities of men,  
And manners, climates, councils, governments,  
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;  
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,  
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.  
I am a part of all that I have met;  
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'  
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin  
fades 20  
For ever and for ever when I move.  
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life  
Were all too little, and of one to me  
Little remains: but every hour is saved  
From that eternal silence, something more,  
A bringer of new things; and vile it were  
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,  
And this gray spirit yearning in desire 30  
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,  
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,  
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—  
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil  
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild  
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees  
Subdue them to the useful and the good.  
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere  
Of common duties, decent not to fail 40  
In offices of tenderness, and pay  
Meet adoration to my household gods,  
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:  
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,  
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought  
with me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took  
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed  
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;  
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil; 50

Death closes all: but something ere the end,  
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,  
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.

## Abt Vogler

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks :  
The long day wanes : the slow moon climbs : the  
deep

Moans round with many voices. Come, my  
friends,

'T is not too late to seek a newer world.

Push off, and sitting well in order smite

The sounding furrows ; for my purpose holds

To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths 60

Of all the western stars, until I die

It may be that the gulfs will wash us down :

It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,

And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.

Tho' much is taken, much abides ; and tho'

We are not now that strength which in old days

Moved earth and heaven ; that which we are, we  
are ;

One equal temper of heroic hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. 70

1842.

*Lord Tennyson.*

## ABT VOGLER

(After he has been extemporizing upon the musical  
instrument of his invention)

WOULD that the structure brave, the manifold  
music I build,

Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their  
work,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as  
when Solomon willed  
Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons  
that lurk,  
Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,  
Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-  
deep removed,—  
Should rush into sight at once as he named the  
ineffable Name,  
And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the  
princess he loved! 8

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful  
building of mine,  
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and  
importuned to raise!  
Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart  
now and now combine,  
Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their  
master his praise!  
And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge  
down to hell,  
Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots  
of things,  
Then up again swim into sight, having based me  
my palace well,  
Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether  
springs. 16

And another would mount and march, like the  
excellent minion he was,  
Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but  
with many a crest,

## Abt Vogler

Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent  
as glass,

Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the  
rest:

For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with  
fire,

When a great illumination surprises a festal  
night—

Outlined round and round Rome's dome from  
space to spire)

Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride  
of my soul was in sight. 24

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain  
to match man's birth.

Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse  
as I;

And the emulous heaven yearned down, made  
effort to reach the earth,

As the earth had done her best, in my passion,  
to scale the sky:

Novel splendors burst forth, grew familiar and  
dwelt with mine,

Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its  
wandering star;

Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they did not  
pale nor pine,

For earth had attained to heaven, there was no  
more near nor far. 32

Nay more; for there wanted not who walked in  
the glare and glow,

Presences plain in the place; or, fresh from the  
Protoplast,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier  
wind should blow,  
Lured now to begin and live, in a house to  
their liking at last;  
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed  
through the body and gone,  
But were back once more to breathe in an old  
world worth their new:  
What never had been, was now; what was, as it  
shall be anon;  
And what is,—shall I say, matched both? for I  
was made perfect too. 40

All through my keys that gave their sounds to  
a wish of my soul,  
All through my soul that praised as its wish  
flowed visibly forth,  
All through music and me! For think, had I  
painted the whole,  
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process  
so wonder-worth:  
Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect  
proceeds from cause,  
Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how  
the tale is told;  
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to  
laws,  
Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list  
enrolled:— 48

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will  
that can,  
Existent behind all laws, that made them and,  
lo, they are!

## Abt Vogler

And I know not if, save in this, such gift be  
allowed to man,  
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth  
sound, but a star.

Consider it well: each tone of our scale in itself  
is naught:

It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and  
all is said:

Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my  
thought.

And there! Ye have heard and seen. consider  
• and bow the head! 56

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I  
reared;

Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that  
come too slow,

For one is assured at first, one scarce can say  
that he feared,

That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing  
was to go

Never to be again! But many more of the kind  
As good, nay, better, perchance is this your  
comfort to me?

To me, who must be saved because I cling with  
my mind

To the same, same self, same love, same God:  
ay, what was, shall be. 64

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffa-  
ble Name?

Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made  
with hands!

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

What, have fear of change from thee who art  
ever the same?

Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy  
power expands?

There shall never be one lost good! What was,  
shall live as before;

The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying  
sound;

What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so  
much good more;

On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven a  
perfect round. 72

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good  
shall exist;

Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor  
good, nor power

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives  
for the melodist

When eternity affirms the conception of an hour,  
The high that proved too high, the heroic for  
earth too hard,

The passion that left the ground to lose itself  
in the sky,

Are music sent up to God by the lover and the  
bard;

Enough that he heard it once - we shall hear  
it by and by. 80

And what is our failure here but a triumph's  
evidence

For the fulness of the days? Have we withered  
or agonized?

## Abt Vogler

Why else was the pause prolonged but that  
singing might issue thence?

Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony  
should be prized?

Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,  
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of weal  
and woe

But God has a few of us whom he whispers in  
the ear;

The rest may reason and welcome 't is we  
musicians know

88

Well, it is earth with me, silence resumes her  
reign

I will be patient and proud and soberly  
acquiesce

Give me the keys I feel for the common chord  
again,

Sliding by semitones till I sink to the minor,—  
yes,

And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien  
ground,

Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from  
into the deep,

Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my  
resting-place is found

The C Major of this life so, now I will try to  
sleep

96

1864.

*Robert Browning*

## SIR GALAHAD

My good blade carves the casques of men,  
My tough lance thrusteth sure,  
My strength is as the strength of ten,  
Because my heart is pure.  
The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,  
The hard brands shiver on the steel,  
The splinter'd spear-shafts crack and fly,  
The horse and rider reel;  
They reel, they roll in clanging lists,  
And when the tide of combat stands,  
Perfume and flowers fall in showers,  
That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

12

How sweet are <sup>o</sup> looks that ladies bend  
On whom their favours fall!  
For them I battle till the end,  
To save from shame and thrall;  
But all my heart is drawn above,  
My knees are bow'd in crypt and shrine:  
I never felt the kiss of love,  
Nor maiden's hand in mine.  
More bounteous aspects on me beam,  
Me mightier transports move and thrill;  
So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer  
A virgin heart in work and will.

24

## Sir Galahad

When down the stormy crescent goes,  
A light before me swims,  
Between dark stems the forest glows,  
I hear a noise of hymns :  
Then by some secret shrine I ride ;  
I hear a voice but none are there ;  
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,  
The tapers burning fair.  
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,  
The silver vessels sparkle clean,  
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,  
And solemn chaunts resound between.

36

Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres  
I find a magic bark ;  
I leap on board : no helmsman steers :  
I float till all is dark.  
A gentle sound, an awful light !  
Three angels bear the Holy Grail :  
With folded feet, in stoles of white,  
On sleeping wings they sail.  
Ah, blessed vision ! blood of God !  
My spirit beats her mortal bars,  
As down dark tides the glory slides,  
And starlike mingles with the stars.

48

When on my goodly charger borne  
Thro' dreaming towns I go,  
The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,  
The streets are dumb with snow.  
The tempest crackles on the leads,  
And, ringing, springs from brand and mail ;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

But o'er the dark a glory spreads,  
And gilds the driving hail.  
I leave the plain, I climb the height;  
No branchy thicket shelter yields;  
But blessed forms in whistling storms  
Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields. 60

A maiden knight—to me is given  
Such hope, I know not fear;  
I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven  
That often meet me here.  
I muse on joy that will not cease,  
Pure spaces clothed in living beams,  
Pure lilies of eternal peace,  
Whose odours haunt my dreams;  
And, stricken by an angel's hand,  
This mortal armour that I wear,  
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,  
Are touch'd, are turn'd to finest air. 72

The clouds are broken in the sky,  
And thro' the mountain-walls  
A rolling organ-harmony  
Swells up and shakes and falls.  
Then move the trees, the copses nod,  
Wings flutter, voices hover clear:  
"O just and faithful knight of God!  
Ride on! the prize is near."  
So pass I hostel, hall, and grange;  
By bridge and ford, by park and pale,  
All-arm'd I ride, whate'er betide,  
Until I find the Holy Grail. 84

## TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

I WONDER do you feel to-day  
As I have felt since, hand in hand,  
We sat down on the grass, to stray  
In spirit better through the land,  
This morn of Rome and May? 5

For me, I touched a thought, I know,  
Has tantalized me many times,  
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw  
Mocking across our path) for rhymes  
To catch at and let go. 10

Help me to hold it! First it left  
The yellowing fennel, run to seed  
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,  
Some old tomb's ruin; yonder weed  
Took up the floating weft, 15

Where one small orange cup amassed  
Five beetles—blind and green they grope  
Among the honey-meal: and last,  
Everywhere on the grassy slope  
I traced it. Hold it fast! 20

The champaign with its endless fleece  
Of feathery grasses everywhere!

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Silence and passion, joy and peace,  
An everlasting wash of air—  
Rome's ghost since her decease. 25

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,  
Such miracles performed in play,  
Such primal naked forms of flowers,  
Such letting nature have her way  
While heaven looks from its towers! 30

How say you? Let us, O my dove,  
Let us be unashamed of soul,  
As earth lies bare to heaven above!  
How is it under our control  
To love or not to love? 35

I would that you were all to me,  
You that are just so much, no more.  
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!  
Where does the fault lie? What the core,  
O' the wound, since wound must be? 40

I would I could adopt your will,  
See with your eyes, and set my heart  
Beating by yours, and drink my fill  
At your soul's springs,—your part my part  
In life, for good and ill. 45

No, I yearn upward, touch you close,  
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,  
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose  
And love it more than tongue can speak—  
Then the good minute goes. 50

## A Woman's Last Word

Already how am I so far

Out of that minute? Must I go  
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,

Onward, whenever light winds blow,  
Fixed by no friendly star? 55

Just when I seemed about to learn!

Where is the thread now? Off again!  
The old trick! Only I discern—

Infinite passion, and the pain  
Of finite hearts that yearn. 60

1855.

*Robert Browning.*

## A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

LET 's contend no more, Love,  
Strive nor weep: •  
All be as before, Love,  
—Only sleep!

What so wild as words are?  
I and thou  
In debate, as birds are,  
Hawk on bough!

See the creature stalking  
While we speak!  
Hush and hide the talking,  
Cheek on cheek!

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

What so false as truth is,  
False to thee?  
Where the serpent's tooth is  
Shun the tree—

16

Where the apple reddens  
Never pry—  
Lest we lose our Edens,  
Eve and I.

Be a god and hold me  
With a charm!  
Be a man and fold me  
With thine arm!

24

Teach me, only teach, Love!  
As I ought  
I will speak thy speech, Love,  
Think thy thought—

28

Meet, if thou require it,  
Both demands,  
Laying flesh and spirit  
In thy hands.

32

That shall be to-morrow,  
Not to-night;  
I must bury sorrow  
Out of sight:

36

4  
**Rabbi Ben Ezra**

—Must a little weep, Love,  
(Foolish me!)  
And so fall asleep, Love,  
Loved by thee.

1855.

40  
*Robert Browning.*

**RABBI BEN EZRA**

GROW old along with me!  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the first was made:  
Our times are in his hand  
Who saith, "A whole I planned,  
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor  
be afraid!"

6

Not that, amassing flowers,  
Youth sighed, "Which rose make ours,  
Which lily leave and then as best recall?"  
Not that, admiring stars,  
It yearned, "Nor Jove, nor Mars;  
Mine be some figured flame which blends,  
transcends them all!"

12

Not for such hopes and fears  
Annulling youth's brief years,  
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!  
Rather I prize the doubt  
Low kinds exist without,  
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a  
spark.

18

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Poor vaunt of life indeed,  
Were man but formed to feed  
On joy, to solely seek and find a feast;  
Such feasting ended, then  
As sure an end to men;  
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the  
maw-crammed beast? 24

Rejoice we are allied  
To that which doth provide  
And not partake, effect and not receive!  
A spark disturbs our clod;  
Nearer we hold of God  
Who gives, than of his tribes that take, I  
must believe. 30

Then, welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!  
Be our joys three-parts pain!  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;  
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never  
grudge the throe! 36

For thence,—a paradox  
Which comforts while it mocks,—  
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:  
What I aspired to be,  
And was not, comforts me:  
A brute I might have been, but would not  
sink i' the scale. 42

## Rabbi Ben Ezra

What is he but a brute  
Whose flesh has soul to suit,  
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want  
play?  
To man, propose this test—  
Thy body at its best,  
How far can that project thy soul on its lone  
way? 48

Yet gifts should prove their use:  
I own the Past profuse  
Of power each side, perfection every turn:  
Eyes, ears took in their dole,  
Brain treasured up the whole;  
Should not the heart beat once "How good to  
live and learn"? 54

Not once beat "Praise be thine!  
I see the whole design,  
I, who saw power, see now Love perfect too:  
Perfect I call thy plan:  
Thanks that I was a man!  
Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what thou  
shalt do!" 60

For pleasant is this flesh;  
Our soul, in its rose-mesh  
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest:  
Would we some prize might hold  
To match those manifold  
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did  
best! 66

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Let us not always say,  
"Spite of this flesh to-day  
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the  
whole!"

As the bird wings and sings,  
Let us cry, "All good things  
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than  
flesh helps soul!" 72

Therefore I summon age  
To grant youth's heritage,  
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:  
Thence shall I pass, approved  
A man, for aye removed  
From the developed brute; a God though in the  
germ. 78

And I shall thereupon  
Take rest, ere I be gone  
Once more on my adventure brave and new:  
Fearless and unperplexed,  
When I wage battle next,  
What weapons to select, what armor to indue. 84

Youth ended, I shall try  
My gain or loss thereby;  
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:  
And I shall weigh the same,  
Give life its praise or blame:  
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being  
old. 90

## Rabbi Ben Ezra

For note, when evening shuts,  
A certain moment cuts  
The deed off, calls the glory from the gray :  
A whisper from the west  
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,  
Take it and try its worth : here dies another  
day." 96

So, still within this life,  
Though lifted o'er its strife,  
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,  
'This rage was right i' the main,  
That acquiescence vain :  
The Future I may face now I have proved the  
Past." 102

For more is not reserved  
To man, with soul just nerved  
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day :  
Here, work enough to watch  
The Master work, and catch  
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's  
true play.\* 108

As it was better, youth  
Should strive, through acts uncouth,  
Toward making, than repose on aught found  
made :  
So, better, age, exempt  
From strife, should know, than tempt  
Further. Thou waitedst age : wait death nor  
be afraid ! 114

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Enough now, if the Right  
And Good and Infinite  
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine  
own,

With knowledge absolute,  
Subject to no dispute  
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee  
feel alone. 120

Be there, for once and all,  
'Severed great minds from small,  
Announced to each his station in the Past!  
Was I, the world arraigned,  
Were they, my soul disdained,  
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us  
peace at last! 126

Now, who shall arbitrate?  
Ten men love what I hate,  
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;  
Ten, who in ears and eyes  
Match me; we all surmise,  
They this thing, and I that: whom shall my  
soul believe? 132

Not on the vulgar mass  
Called "work," must sentence pass,  
Things done, that took the eye and had the  
price;  
O'er which, from level stand,  
The low world laid its hand,  
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a  
trice: 138

## Rabbi Ben Ezra

But all, the world's coarse thumb,  
And finger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the main account ;  
All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the  
man's amount : 144

Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act,  
Fancies that broke through language and es-  
caped ;  
All I could never be,  
All, men ignored in me,  
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the  
pitcher shaped. 150

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,  
That metaphor ! and feel  
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—  
Thou, to whom fools propound,  
When the wine makes its round,  
“ Since life fleets, all is change ; the Past gone,  
seize to-day ! ” 156

Fool ! All that is, at all,  
Lasts ever, past recall ;  
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure :  
What entered into thee,  
*That* was, is, and shall be :  
Time's wheel runs back or stops : Potter and  
clay endure. 162

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

He fixed thee 'mid this dance  
Of plastic circumstance,  
This Present, thou, forsooth, would fain arrest :  
Machinery just meant  
To give thy soul its bent,  
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently im-  
pressed. 168

What though the earlier grooves,  
Which ran the laughing loves  
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?  
What though, about thy rim,  
Skull-things in order grim  
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner  
stress? 174

Look not thou down but up !  
To uses of a cup,  
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's  
peal,  
The new wine's foaming flow,  
The Master's lips aglow !  
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst.  
thou with earth's wheel? 180

But I need, now as then,  
Thee, God, who moulded men ;  
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,  
Did I—to the wheel of life  
With shapes and colors rife,  
Bound dizzily—mistake my end, to slake thy  
thirst : 186

## Saul

So, take and use thy work:  
Amend what flaws may lurk,  
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the  
aim!  
My times be in thy hand!  
Perfect the cup as planned!  
Let age approve of youth, and death complete  
the same!

192

1864.

*Robert Browning.*

## SAUL

SAID Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell,  
ere thou speak,  
Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished  
it, and did kiss his cheek.  
And he: "Since the King, O my friend, for thy  
countenance sent,  
Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until  
from his tent  
Thou return with the joyful assurance the King  
liveth yet,  
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the  
water be wet.  
For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space  
of three days,  
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of  
prayer nor of praise,  
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended  
their strife,  
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch  
sinks back upon life.

10

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child  
with his dew  
On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still  
living and blue  
Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings,  
as if no wild heat  
Were now raging to torture the desert!"

Then I, as was meet,  
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose  
on my feet,  
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The  
tent was unlooped;  
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under  
I stooped;  
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch,  
all withered and gone,  
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped  
my way on,  
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then  
once more I prayed, 20  
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was  
not afraid  
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And  
no voice replied.  
At the first I saw naught but the blackness: but  
soon I descried  
A something more black than the blackness—  
the vast, the upright  
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and  
slow into sight

## Saul

Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest  
of all.

Then a sunbeam, that burst through the tent-  
roof, showed Saul.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms  
stretched out wide

On the great cross-support in the centre, that  
goes to each side ;

He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as,  
caught in his pangs 30

And waiting his change, the king-serpent all  
heavily hangs,

Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliver-  
ance come

With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear  
and stark, blind and dumb.

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we  
twine round its chords

Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide  
—those sunbeams like swords !

And I first played the tune all our sheep know,  
as, one after one,

So docile they come to the pen-door till folding  
be done.

They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo,  
they have fed

Where the long grasses stifle the water within  
the stream's bed ;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star  
follows star 40

Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and  
so far!

—Then the tune for which quails on the corn-  
land will each leave his mate

To fly after the player; then, what makes the  
crickets elate

Till for boldness they fight one another; and  
then, what has weight

To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his  
sand house—

There are none such as he for a wonder, half  
bird and half mouse!

God made all the creatures and gave them our  
love and our fear,

To give sign, we and they are his children, one  
family here.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their  
wine-song, when hand

Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friend-  
ship, and great hearts expand 50

And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—  
And then, the last song

When the dead man is praised on his journey—  
“Bear, bear him along,

With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets!  
Are balm seeds not here

To console us? The land has none left such as  
he on the bier.

## Saul

Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother! "—

And then the glad chaunt

Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens,  
next, she whom we vaunt

As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And  
then, the great march

Wherein man runs to man to assist him and  
buttress an arch

Naught can break; who shall harm them, our  
friends? Then, the chorus intoned

As the Levites go up to the altar in glory en-  
throned. 60

But I stopped here: for here in the darkness  
Saul groaned.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence,  
and listened apart;

And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered:  
and sparkles 'gan dart

From the jewels that woke in his turban, at  
once, with a start,

All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies cour-  
ageous at heart.

So the head: but the body still moved not, still  
hung there-erect.

And I bent once again to my playing, pursued  
it unchecked,

As I sang:—

'Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! No spirit  
feels waste,

Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew  
unbraced.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from  
rock up to rock, 70  
The strong rending of boughs from the fire-tree,  
the cool silver shock  
Of the plunge in a pool's lying water, the hunt  
of the bear,  
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched  
in his lair.  
And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with  
gold dust divine,  
And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the  
full draught of wine,  
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where  
bulrushes tell  
That the water was wont to go warbling so  
softly and well.  
How good is man's life, the mere living! how  
fit to employ  
All the heart and the soul and the senses  
forever in joy!  
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father,  
whose sword thou didst guard 80  
When he trusted thee forth with the armies,  
for glorious reward?  
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother,  
held up as men sung  
The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear  
her faint tongue  
Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let  
one more attest,  
I have lived, seen God's hand through a lifetime,  
and all was for best?'

## Saul

Then they sung through their tears in strong  
triumph, not much, but the rest.  
And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the  
working whence grew  
Such result as, from seething grape-bundles,  
the spirit strained true:  
And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood  
of wonder and hope,  
Present promise and wealth of the future  
beyond the eye's scope,— 90  
Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people  
is thine;  
And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on  
one head combine!  
On one head, all the beauty and strength, love  
and rage (like the throe  
That, a-work in the rock, helps its labor and  
lets the gold go),  
High ambition and deeds which surpass it,  
fame crowning them,—all  
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—  
King Saul!"

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart,  
hand, harp and voice,  
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each  
bidding rejoice  
Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as  
when, dare I say,  
The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains  
through its array, 100

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!"  
cried I, and stopped,  
And waited the thing that should follow. Then  
Saul, who hung propped  
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was  
struck by his name.  
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons  
goes right to the aim,  
And some mountain, the last to withstand her,  
that held (he alone,  
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers)  
on a broad bust of stone  
A year's snow bound about for a breast-plate,—  
leaves grasp of the sheet?  
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously  
down to his feet.  
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet,  
your mountain of old,  
With his rents, the successive bequeathing of  
ages untold—  
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each  
furrow and scar  
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—  
all hail, there they are!  
—Now again to be softened with verdure,  
again hold the nest  
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to  
the green on his crest  
For their food in the ardors of summer. One  
long shudder thrilled  
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank  
and was stilled

## Saul

At the King's self left standing before me,  
released and aware.  
What was gone, what remained? All to  
traverse 'twixt hope and despair,  
Death was past, life not come: so he waited.  
Awhile his right hand  
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant  
forthwith to remand 120  
To their place what new objects should enter:  
't was Saul as before  
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor  
was hurt any more  
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye  
watch from the shore,  
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's  
slow decline  
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'er-  
lap and entwine  
Base with base to knit strength more intensely:  
so, arm folded arm  
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided

What spell or what charm,  
(For awhile there was trouble within me,) what  
next should I urge  
To sustain him where song had restored him?—  
Song filled to the verge  
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all  
that it yields 130  
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty:  
beyond, on what fields,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to  
    brighten the eye  
And bring blood to the lip, and commend them  
    the cup they put by?  
He saith, "It is good"; still he drinks not: he  
    lets me praise life,  
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

    Then fancies grew rife  
Which had come long ago on the pasture, when  
    round me the sheep  
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled  
    slow as in sleep;  
And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world  
    that might lie  
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt  
    the hill and the sky:  
And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained  
    to be passed with my flocks,                   140  
Let me people at least, with my fancies, the  
    plains and the rocks,  
Dream the life I am never to mix with, and  
    image the show  
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I  
    hardly shall know!  
Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses,  
    the courage that gains,  
And the prudence that keeps what men strive  
    for." And now these old trains  
Of vague thought came again; I grew surer;  
    so, once more the string  
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as  
    thus—

## Saul

"Yea, my King,"

I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere  
comforts that spring  
From the mere mortal life held in common by  
man and by brute ·  
In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in  
our soul it bears fruit 150  
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—  
how its stem trembled first  
Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler;  
then safely outburst  
The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest  
when these too, in turn,  
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect yet more was to learn,  
E'en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit.  
Our dates shall we slight,  
When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow?  
or care for the plight  
Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced  
them? Not so! stem and branch  
Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while  
the palm-wine shall stanch  
Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour  
thee such wine,  
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the  
spirit be thine! 160  
By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee,  
thou still shalt enjoy  
More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the  
life of a boy  
Crush that life, and behold its wine running!  
Each deed thou hast done

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until  
e'en as the sun  
Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil  
him, though tempests efface,  
Can find nothing his own deed produced not,  
must everywhere trace  
The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each  
ray of thy will,  
Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long  
over, shall thrill  
Thy whole people, the countless, with ardor,  
till they too give forth  
A like cheer to their sons, who in turn fill the  
South and the North 170  
With the radiance thy deed was the germ of.  
Carouse in the past!  
But the license of age has its limit; thou diest  
at last:  
As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose  
at her height,  
So with man—so his power and his beauty  
forever take flight.  
No! Again a long draught of my soul-wine!  
Look forth o'er the years!  
Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual;  
begin with the seer's!  
Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make  
his tomb—bid arise  
A gray mountain of marble heaped four-square,  
till, built to the skies,  
Let it mark where the great First King slum-  
bers: whose fame would ye know?

## Saul

Up above see the rock's naked face, where the  
record shall go 180

In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such  
was Saul, so he did;

With the sages directing the work, by the popu-  
lace chid,—

For not half, they 'll affirm, is comprised there!  
Which fault to amend,

In the grove with his kind grows the cedar,  
whereon they shall spend

(See, in tablets 't is level before them) their  
praise, and record

With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the  
stateman's great word

Side by side with the poet's sweet comment.

The river 's a-wave

With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other  
when prophet-winds rave:

So the pen gives unborn generations their due  
and their part

In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank  
God that thou art!" 190

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who  
didst grant me that day,

And before it not seldom hast granted thy help  
to essay,

Carry on and complete an adventure,—my  
shield and my sword

In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy  
word was my word,—

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Still be with me, who then at the summit of  
human endeavor  
And scaling the highest, man's thought could,  
gazed hopeless as ever  
On the new stretch of heaven above me—till,  
mighty to save,  
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—  
God's throne from man's grave!  
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice  
to my heart  
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels  
last night I took part, 200  
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone  
with my sheep,  
And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish  
like sleep!  
For I wake in the gray dewy covert, while  
Hebron upheaves  
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder,  
and Kidron retrieves  
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

I say then,—my song  
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and  
ever more strong  
Made a proffer of good to console him—he  
slowly resumed  
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The  
right hand replumed  
His black locks to their wonted composure,  
adjusted the swathes

## Saul

Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his  
countenance bathes, 210

He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now  
his loins as of yore,

And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the  
clasp set before.

He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error  
had bent

The broad brow from daily communion; and  
still, though much spent

Be the life and the bearing that front you, the  
same, God did choose,

To receive what a man may waste, desecrate,  
never quite lose.

So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed  
by the pile

Of his armor and war-cloak and garments, he  
leaned there awhile,

And sat out my singing,—one arm round the  
tent-prop, to raise

His bent head, and the other hung slack—till  
I touched on the praise 220

I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man  
patient there;

And thus ended, the harp falling forward.

Then first I was 'ware

That he sat, as I say, with my head just above  
his vast knees

Which were thrust out on each side around me,  
like oak roots which please

To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked  
up to know

## Masterpieces of English Poetry

If the best I could do had brought solace: he  
spoke not, but slow  
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid  
it with care  
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my  
brow: through my hair  
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back  
my head, with kind power—  
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men  
do a flower. 230  
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that  
scrutinized mine—  
And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but  
where was the sign?  
I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, in-  
venting a bliss,  
I would add, to that life of the past, both the  
future and this;  
I would give thee new life altogether, as good,  
ages hence,  
As this moment,—had love but the warrant,  
love's heart to dispense!"

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—  
no song more! outbroke—

"I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw  
and I spoke:  
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose,  
received in my brain  
And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—  
returned him again 240

## Saul

His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as  
I saw:

I report, as a man may of God's work—all 's  
love, yet all 's law.

Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me.

Each faculty tasked

To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a  
dewdrop was asked.

Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at  
Wisdom laid bare.

Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank  
to the Infinite Care!

Do I task any faculty highest, to image suc-  
cess?

I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more  
and no less,

In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and  
God is seen God

In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the  
soul and the clod. 250

And thus looking within and around me, I ever  
renew

(With that stoop of the soul which in bending  
upraises it too)

The submission of man's nothing-perfect to  
God's all-complete,

As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to  
his feet.

Yet with all this abounding experience, this  
deity known,

I shall dare to discover some province, some  
gift of my own.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

There 's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard  
to hoodwink,  
I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as  
I think)  
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot  
ye, I worst  
E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could  
love if I durst! 260  
But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may  
o'ertake  
God's own speed in the one way of love: I  
abstain for love's sake.  
—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther?  
when doors great and small,  
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, shou'd  
the hundredth appall?  
In the least things have faith, yet distrust in  
the greatest of all?  
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ulti-  
mate gift, ,  
That I doubt his own love can compete with  
it? Here, the parts shift?  
Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the  
end, what Began?  
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all  
for this man,  
And dare doubt he alone shall not help him,  
who yet alone can? 270  
Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare  
will, much less power,  
To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the  
marvellous dower

## Saul

Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to  
make such a soul,  
Such a body, and then such an earth for  
insphering the whole?  
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm  
tears attest)  
These good things being given, to go on, and  
give one more, the best?  
Ay, to save and redeem and restore him,  
maintain at the height  
This perfection,—succeed with life's day-spring,  
death's minute of night?  
Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul the  
mistake,  
Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and  
bid him awake 280  
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to  
find himself set  
Clear and safe in new light and new life.—a  
new harmony yet  
To be run, and continued, and ended—who  
knows?—or endure!  
The man taught enough by life's dream, of the  
rest to make sure;  
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning in-  
tensified bliss,  
And the next world's reward and repose, by  
the struggles in this.

“I believe it! 'T is thou, God, that givest, 't is  
I who receive:

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

In the first is the last, in thy will is my power  
to believe.

All 's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover,  
as prompt to my prayer

As I breathe out this breath, as I open these  
arms to the air. 290

From thy will stream the worlds, life and  
nature, thy dread Sabaoth:

*I* will?—the mere atoms despise me! Why  
am I not loth

To look that, even that in the face too? Why  
is it I dare

Think but lightly of such impuissance? What  
stops my despair?

This;—'t is not what man Does which exalts  
him, but what man Would do!

See the King—I would help him but cannot,  
the wishes fall through.

Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow  
poor to enrich,

To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—  
knowing which,

I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak  
through me now!

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst  
thou—so wilt thou! 300

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest,  
uttermost crown—

And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave  
up nor down

One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by  
no breath,

## Saul

Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins  
issue with death!

As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty  
be proved

Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being  
Beloved!

He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest  
shall stand the most weak.

'T is the weakness in strength, that I cry for!  
my flesh, that I seek

In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it  
shall be

A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man  
like to me, 310

Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a  
Hand like this hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee!  
See the Christ stand!

I know not too well how I found my way home  
in the night.

There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to  
left and to right,

Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the  
alive, the aware:

I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as  
strugglingly there,

As a runner beset by the populace famished for  
news—

Life or death. The whole earth was awakened,  
hell loosed with her crews;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And the stars of night beat with emotion, and  
tingled and shot  
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge :  
but I fainted not, 320  
For the Hand still impelled me at once and  
supported, suppressed  
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and  
holy behest,  
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the  
earth sank to rest.  
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered  
from earth—  
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's  
tender birth ;  
In the gathered intensity brought to the gray  
of the hills ;  
In the shuddering forests' held breath ; in the  
sudden wind-thrills ;  
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each  
with eye sidling still  
Though averted with wonder and dread ; in the  
birds stiff and chill  
That rose heavily, as I approached them, made  
stupid with awe : 330  
E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt  
the new law.  
The same stared in the white humid faces up-  
turned by the flowers ;  
The same worked in the heart of the cedar and  
moved the vine-bowers :

## Verses

And the little brooks witnessing murmured,  
persistent and low,  
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—  
“E'en so, it is so!”

1845. 1855.

*Robert Browning.*

## VERSES

Supposed to be written by Alexander Selkirk  
during his solitary abode in the  
island of Juan Fernandez

I AM monarch of all I survey,  
My right there is none to dispute,  
From the centre all round to the sea,  
I am lord of the fowl and the brute.  
O Solitude! where are the charms  
That sages have seen in thy face?  
Better dwell in the midst of alarms,  
Than reign in this horrible place. 8

I am out of humanity's reach,  
I must finish my journey alone,  
Never hear the sweet music of speech,  
I start at the sound of my own.  
The beasts that roam over the plain,  
My form with indifference see;  
They are so unacquainted with man,  
Their tameness is shocking to me. 16

Society, friendship, and love,  
Divinely bestowed upon man,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Oh, had I the wings of a dove,  
How soon would I taste you again!  
My sorrows I then might assuage  
In the ways of religion and truth,  
Might learn from the wisdom of age,  
And be cheered by the sallies of youth. 24

Religion! what treasure untold  
Resides in that heavenly word!  
More precious than silver and gold,  
Or all that this earth can afford.  
But the sound of the church-going bell  
These valleys and rocks never heard,  
Never sighed at the sound of a knell,  
Or smiled when a Sabbath appeared. 32

Ye winds, that have made me your sport,  
Convey to this desolate shore  
Some cordial endearing report  
Of a land I shall visit no more.  
My friends,—do they now and then send  
A wish or a thought after me?  
O tell me I yet have a friend,  
Though a friend I am never to see. 40

How fleet is a glance of the mind!  
Compared with the speed of its flight,  
The tempest itself lags behind,  
And the swift-winged arrows of light:  
When I think of my own native land,  
In a moment I seem to be there;  
But alas! recollection at hand  
Soon hurries me back to despair. 48

## Locksley Hall

But the sea-fowl is gone to her nest,  
The beast is laid down in his lair,  
Even here is a season of rest,  
And I to my cabin repair.  
There 's mercy in every place,  
And mercy, encouraging thought!  
Gives even affliction a grace,  
And reconciles man to his lot. 56

1782.

*William Cowper.*

## LOCKSLEY HALL

COMRADES, leave me here a little, while as yet  
't is early morn :

Leave me here, and when you want me, sound  
upon the bugle-horn.

'T is the place, and all around it, as of old, the  
curlews call,

Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over  
Locksley Hall ; 4

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks  
the sandy tracts,  
And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into  
cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere  
I went to rest,  
Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the  
West. 8

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising thro' the  
mellow shade,  
Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a  
silver braid.

Here about the beach I wander'd, nourishing a  
youth sublime  
With the fairy tales of science, and the long  
result of time; 12

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful  
land reposed;  
When I clung to all the present for the promise  
that it closed;

When I dipped into the future far as human eye  
could see,  
Saw the Vision of the world and all the wonder  
that would be.— 16

In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the  
robin's breast;  
In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets himself  
another crest;

In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the  
burnish'd dove;  
In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns  
to thoughts of love. 20

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than  
should be for one so young,

## Locksley Hall

And her eyes on all my motions with a mute  
observance hung.

And I said, " My cousin Amy, speak, and speak  
the truth to me,  
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being  
sets to thee." 24

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a color  
and a light,  
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the  
northern night.

And she turn'd—her bosom shaken with a  
sudden 'storm of sighs—  
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of  
hazel eyes— 28

Saying, " I have hid my feelings, fearing they  
should do me wrong ";  
Saying, " Dost thou love me, cousin? " weeping,  
" I have loved thee long."

Love took up the glass of time, and turn'd it  
in his glowing hands ;  
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in  
golden sands. 32

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all  
the chords with might ;  
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, past  
in music out of sight.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear  
the cospes ring,  
And her whisper throng'd my pulses with the  
fulness of the Spring. 36

Many an evening by the waters did we watch  
the stately ships,  
And our spirits rush'd together at the touching  
of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy,  
mine no more!  
O the dreary, dreary, moorland! O the barren,  
barren shore! 40

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all  
songs have sung,  
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a  
shrewish tongue!

Is it well to wish thee happy? having known  
me—to decline  
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower  
heart than mine! 44

Yet it shall be: thou shalt lower to his level  
day by day,  
What is fine within thee growing coarse to  
sympathize with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is: thou art mated  
with a clown,

## Locksley Hall

And the grossness of his nature will have  
weight to drag thee down. 48

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have  
spent its novel force,  
Something better than his dog, a little dearer  
than his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy: think not they  
are glazed with wine.  
Go to him: it is thy duty: kiss him: take his  
hand in thine. 52

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is  
overwrought;  
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him  
with thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to  
understand—  
Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I slew  
thee with my hand! 56

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the  
heart's disgrace,  
Roll'd in one another's arms, and silent in a last  
embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the  
strength of youth!  
Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the  
living truth! 60

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest  
Nature's rule!

Cursed be the gold that gilds the straiten'd  
forehead of the fool!

Well—'t is well that I should bluster!—

Hadst thou less unworthy proved—

Would to God—for I had loved thee more than  
ever wife was loved. 64

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which  
bears but bitter fruit?

I will pluck it from my bosom, tho' my heart  
be at the root.

Never, tho' my mortal summers to such length  
of years should come

As the many-winter'd crow that leads the  
clanging rookery home. 68

Where is comfort? in division of the records  
of the mind?

Can I part her from myself, and love her, as  
I knew her, kind?

I remember one that perish'd; sweetly did she  
speak and move;

Such a one do I remember, whom to look at  
was to love. 72

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for  
the love she bore?

## Locksley Hall

No—she never loved me truly: love is love for  
evermore.

Comfort? comfort scorn'd of devils! this is  
truth the poet sings,  
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remem-  
bering happier things. 76

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy  
heart be put to proof,  
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain  
is on the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art  
staring at the wall,  
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the  
shadows rise and fall 80

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing  
to his drunken sleep,  
To thy widow'd marriage-pillows, to the tears  
that thou wilt weep

•  
Thou shalt hear the "Never, never," whisper'd  
by the phantom years, .  
And a song from out the distance in the ringing  
of thine cars; 84

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient  
kindness on thy pain.  
Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow: get thee to  
thy rest again.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace ; for a tender  
voice will cry.

'T is a purer life than thine, a lip to drain thy  
trouble dry. 88

Baby lips will laugh me down ; my latest rival  
brings thee rest.

Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from  
the mother's breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a dear-  
ness not his due.

Half is thine and half is his ; it will be worthy  
of the two. 92

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty  
part,

With a little hoard of maxims preaching down  
a daughter's heart.

" They were dangerous guides the feelings—she  
herself was not exempt—

Truly, she herself had suffer'd"—Perish in thy  
self-contempt ! 96

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy ! wherefore  
should I care ?

I myself must mix with action, lest I wither  
by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting  
upon days like these ?

## Locksley Hall

Every door is barr'd with gold, and opens but  
to golden keys. 100

Every gate is throng'd with suitors, all the  
markets overflow.  
I have but an angry fancy: what is that which  
I should do?

I had been content to perish, falling on the  
foeman's ground,  
When the ranks are roll'd in vapor, and the  
winds are laid with sound. 104

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt  
that Honour feels,  
And the nations do but murmur, snarling at  
each other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that  
earlier page.  
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou won-  
drous Mother-Age! 108

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt  
before the strife,  
When I heard my days before me, and the  
tumult of my life;

Yearning for the large excitement that the  
coming years would yield,  
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves  
his father's field, 112

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And at night along the dusky highway near  
and nearer drawn,  
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like  
a dreary dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone  
before him then,  
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the  
throngs of men; 116

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever  
reaping something new;  
That which they have done but earnest of the  
things that they shall do.

For I dipped into the future, far as human eye  
could see,  
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder  
that would be; 120

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies  
of magic sails,  
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down  
with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there  
rain'd a ghastly dew  
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the  
central blue; 124

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-  
wind rushing warm,

## Locksley Hall

With the standards of the peoples plunging  
thro' the thunder-storm;

Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the  
battle-flags were furl'd

In the Parliament of man, the Federation of  
the world. 128

There the common sense of most shall hold a  
fretful realm in awe,

And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapped in  
universal law.

So I triumph'd ere my passion sweeping thro'  
me left me dry,

Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with  
the jaundiced eye; 132

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here  
are out of joint:

Science moves, but slowly, slowly, creeping on  
from point to point;

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion,  
creeping nigher,

Glares at one that nods and winks behind a  
slowly-dying fire. 136

Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing  
purpose runs,

And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the  
process of the suns.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of  
his youthful joys,  
Tho' the deep heart of existence beat for ever  
like a boy's? 140

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I  
linger on the shore,  
And the individual withers, and the world is  
more and more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he  
bears a laden breast,  
Full of sad experience, moving toward the still-  
ness of his rest. 144

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding  
on the bugle-horn,  
They to whom my foolish passion were a target  
for their scorn:

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a  
moulder'd string?  
I am shamed thro' all my nature to have loved  
so slight a thing. 148

Weakness to be wroth with weakness! woman's  
pleasure, woman's pain—  
Nature made them blinder motions bounded  
in a shallower brain:

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions,  
match'd with mine,

## Locksley Hall

Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water  
unto wine— 152

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing.  
Ah, for some retreat  
Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life  
began to beat,

Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my father  
evil-starr'd;—  
I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish  
uncle's ward. 156

Or to burst all links of habit—there to wander  
far away,  
On from island unto island at the gateways of  
the day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons  
and happy skies,  
Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster,  
knots of Paradise. 160

Never comes the trader, never floats an  
European flag,  
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings  
the trailer from the crag;

Droops the heavy-blossom'd bower, hangs the  
heavy-fruited tree—  
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purpled  
spheres of sea. 164

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

There methinks would be enjoyment more than  
in this march of mind,  
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts  
that shake mankind.

There the passions cramp'd no longer shall have  
scope and breathing space ;  
I will take some savage woman, she shall rear  
my dusky race. 168

Iron-jointed, supple-sinew'd, they shall dive,  
and they shall run,  
Catch the wild goat by the hair. and hurl their  
lances in the sun ;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the  
rainbows of the brooks,  
Not with blinded eyesight poring over miser-  
able books— 172

Fool, again the dream, the fancy ! but I *know*  
my words are wild,  
But I count the gray barbarian lower than the  
Christian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our  
glorious gains,  
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast  
with lower pains ! 176

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were  
sun or clime ?

## Locksley Hall

I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files  
of time—

I that rather held it better men should perish  
one by one,  
Than that earth should stand at gaze like  
Joshua's moon in Ajalon! 180

Not in vain the distance beacons Forward,  
forward let us range,  
Let the great world spin for ever down the  
ringing grooves of change

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into  
the younger day:  
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of  
Cathay. 184

Mother-Age,—for mine I knew not,—help me  
as when life begun.  
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the  
lightnings, weigh the Sun

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath  
not set  
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all my  
fancy yet 188

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to  
Locksley Hall!  
Now for me the woods may wither, now for  
me the roof-tree fall.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Comes a vapour from the margin, blackening  
over heath and holt,  
Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast  
a thunderbolt. 192

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail,  
or fire or snow ;  
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward,  
and I go.

1842.

*Lord Tennyson.*

## ANTONY TO CLEOPATRA

I AM dying, Egypt, dying !  
Ebbs the crimson life-tide fast,  
And the dark Plutonian shadows  
Gather on the evening blast ;  
Let thine arms, oh Queen, support me,  
Hush thy sobs and bow thine ear,  
Listen to the great heart secrets  
Thou, and thou alone, must hear.

Though my scarred and veteran legions  
Bear their eagles high no more,  
And my wrecked and scattered galleys  
Strew dark Actium's fatal shore,  
Though no glittering guards surround me,  
Prompt to do their master's will,  
I must perish like a Roman—  
Die the great Triumvir still. 16

## Antony to Cleopatra

Let not Cæsar's servile minions

Mock the lion thus laid low ;

'T was no foeman's arm that felled him,

'T was his own that struck the blow :

His who, pillowed on thy bosom,

Turned aside from glory's ray—

His who, drunk with thy caresses,

Madly threw a world away.

24

Should the base plebeian rabble

Dare assail my name at Rome,

Where my noble spouse, Octavia,

Weeps within her widowed home—

Seek her ; say the gods bear witness—

Altars, augurs, circling wings—

That her blood, with mine commingled,

Yet shall mount the throne of kings. 32

As for thee, star-eyed Egyptian—

Glorious sorceress of the Nile !

Light the path to Stygian darkness,

With the splendor of thy smile ;

Give the Cæsar crowns and arches,

Let his brow the laurel twine ;

I can scorn the Senate's triumphs,

Triumphing in love like thine.

40

I am dying, Egypt, dying !

Mark ! the insulting foeman's cry ;

They are coming—quick, my falchion !

Let me front them ere I die.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Ah! no more amid the battle  
Shall my heart exulting swell;  
Isis and Osiris guard thee—  
Cleopatra—Rome—farewell!

48

1860.

*William Haines Lytle.*

### THE LAST BUCCANEER

OH, England is a pleasant place for them that 's  
rich and high,  
But England is a cruel place for such poor folks  
as I;  
And such a port for mariners I ne'er shall see  
again  
As the pleasant Isle of Avès, beside the Spanish  
main.

4

There were forty craft in Avès that were both  
swift and stout,  
All furnish'd well with small arms and cannons  
round about;  
And a thousand men in Avès made laws to fair  
and free  
To choose their valiant captains and obey them  
loyally.

8

Thence we sail'd against the Spaniard with his  
hoards of plate and gold,  
Which he wrung by cruel tortures from the In-  
dian folk of old;

## The Last Buccaneer

Likewise the merchant captains, with hearts as  
hard as stone,  
Which flog men and keel-haul them, and starve  
them to the bone. 12

Oh, the palms grew high in Avès, and fruits that  
shone like gold,  
And the colibris and parrots they were gorgeous  
to behold ;  
And the negro maids to Avès from bondage fast  
did flee,  
To welcome gallant sailors a-sweeping in from  
sea. 16

Oh, sweet it was in Avès to hear the landward  
breeze,  
A-swing with good tobacco in a net between the  
trees,  
With a negro lass to fan you, while you listen'd  
to the roar  
Of the breakers on the reef outside, that never  
touched the shore. 20

But Scripture saith, an ending to all fine things  
must be ;  
So the King's ships sail'd on Avès, and quite  
put down were we.  
All day we fought like bulldogs, but they burst  
the booms at night ;  
And I fled in a piragua, sore wounded, from the  
fight. 24

## Masterpieces of English Poetry

Nine days I floated starving, and a negro lass  
beside,  
Till for all I tried to cheer her, the poor young  
thing she died;  
But as I lay a-gasping, a Bristol sail came by,  
And brought me home to England here, to beg  
until I die. 28

And now I 'm old and going—I 'm sure I can't  
tell where;  
One comfort is, this world's so hard, I can't be  
worse off there:  
If I might be a sea-dove, I 'd fly across the  
main,  
To the pleasant Isle of Avès, to look at it once  
again. 32

1857.

*Charles Kingsley.*

## LIFE'S PHILOSOPHY



## THE WORLD

I SAW Eternity the other night,  
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,  
All calm, as it was bright;  
And round beneath it, Time in hours, days,  
    years,  
Driv'n by the spheres  
Like a vast shadow mov'd; in which the world  
And all her train were hurl'd. 7

The doting lover in his quaintest strain  
Did there complain;  
Near him, his lute, his fancy, and his slights,  
Wit's sour delights;  
With gloves, and knots the silly snares of  
    pleasure,  
Yet his dear treasure,  
All scatter'd lay, while he his eyes did pour  
Upon a flower. 15

The darksome statesman, hung with weights  
    and woe,  
Like a thick midnight-fog, moved there so slow,  
He did nor stay, nor go;  
Condemning thoughts—like sad eclipses—scowl  
Upon his soul,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And clouds of crying witnesses without  
Pursued him with one shout.  
Yet digg'd the mole, and lest his ways be  
found,  
Work'd under ground,  
Where he did clutch his prey; but one did see  
That policy:  
Churches and altars fed him; perjuries  
Were gnats and flies;  
It rain'd about him blood and tears, but he  
Drank them as free. 30

The fearful miser on a heap of rust  
Sate pining all his life there, did scarce trust  
His own hands with the dust,  
Yet would not place one piece above, but lives  
In fear of thieves.  
Thousands there were as frantic as himself,  
And hugg'd each one his pelf;  
The down-right epicure plac'd heav'n in sense,  
And scorn'd pretence;  
While others, slip'd into a wide excess,  
Said little less;  
The weaker sort slight, trivial wares enslave,  
Who think them brave;  
And poor, despis'd Truth sate counting by  
Their victory. 45

Yet some, who all this while did weep and sing,  
And sing, and weep, soar'd up into the ring;  
But most would use no wing.

## A Psalm of Life

O fools—said I—thus to prefer dark night  
Before true light!  
To live in grotts and caves, and hate the day  
Because it shows the way;  
The way, which from this dead and dark abode  
Leads up to God;  
A way where you might tread the sun, and be  
More bright than he!  
But as I did their madness so discuss,  
One whisper'd thus,  
'This ring the Bride-groom did for none  
provide,  
But for His Bride.' 60  
1650. *Henry Vaughan.*

## A PSALM OF LIFE

TELL me not, in mournful numbers,  
Life is but an empty dream!—  
For the soul is dead that slumbers,  
And things are not what they seem. 4

Life is real! Life is earnest!  
And the grave is not its goal;  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,  
Was not spoken of the soul. 8

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,  
Is our destined end or way;  
But to act, that each to-morrow  
Find us farther than to-day. 12

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,  
And our hearts, though stout and brave,  
Still, like muffled drums, are beating  
Funeral marches to the grave. 16

In the world's broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac of Life,  
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!  
Be a hero in the strife! 20

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!  
Let the dead Past bury its dead!  
Act,—act in the living Present!  
Heart within, and God o'erhead! 24

Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time; 28

Footprints, that perhaps another,  
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again. 32

Let us, then, be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labor and to wait. 36

1838.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.*

## THE BELEAGUERED CITY

I HAVE read, in some old, marvellous tale,  
Some legend strange and vague,  
That a midnight host of spectres pale  
Beleaguered the walls of Prague. 4

Beside the Moldau's rushing stream,  
With the wan moon overhead,  
There stood, as in an awful dream,  
The army of the dead. 8

White as a sea-fog, landward bound,  
The spectral camp was seen,  
And, with a sorrowful, deep sound,  
The river flowed between. 12

No other voice nor sound was there,  
No drum, nor sentry's pace;  
The mist-like banners clasped the air,  
As clouds with clouds embrace. 16

But when the old cathedral bell  
Proclaimed the morning prayer,  
The white pavilions rose and fell  
On the alarmed air. 20

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry.

Down the broad valley fast and far  
The troubled army fled ;  
Up rose the glorious morning star,  
The ghastly host was dead. 24

I have read, in the marvellous heart of man,  
That strange and mystic scroll,  
That an army of phantoms vast and wan  
Beleaguer the human soul. 28

Encamped beside Life's rushing stream,  
In Fancy's misty light,  
Gigantic shapes and shadows gleam  
Portentous through the night. 32

Upon its midnight battle-ground  
The spectral camp is seen,  
And, with a sorrowful, deep sound,  
Flows the River of Life between. 36

No other voice nor sound is there,  
In the army of the grave ;  
No other challenge breaks the air,  
But the rushing of Life's wave. 40

And when the solemn and deep church-bell  
Entreats the soul to pray,  
The midnight phantoms feel the spell,  
The shadows sweep away. 44

## Influence of Natural Objects

Down the broad Vale of Tears afar  
The spectral camp is fled;  
Faith shineth as a morning star,  
Our ghastly fears are dead.

48

1839.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.*

## INFLUENCE OF NATURAL OBJECTS

IN CALLING FORTH AND STRENGTHENING THE  
IMAGINATION IN BOYHOOD AND EARLY YOUTH

WISDOM and Spirit of the universe!  
Thou Soul, that art the Eternity of thought!  
And giv'st to forms and images a breath  
And everlasting motion! not in vain,  
By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn  
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me  
The passions that build up our human soul;  
Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man;  
But with high objects, with enduring things,  
With life and nature; purifying thus 10  
The elements of feeling and of thought,  
And sanctifying by such discipline  
Both pain and fear,—until we recognize  
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me  
With stinted kindness. In November days,  
When vapours rolling down the valleys made

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

A lonely scene more lonesome; among woods  
At noon; and 'mid the calm of summer nights,  
When by the margin of the trembling lake, 20  
Beneath the gloomy hills, homeward I went  
In solitude, such intercourse was mine:  
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,  
And by the waters, all the summer long.  
And in the frosty season, when the sun  
Was set, and, visible for many a mile,  
The cottage-windows through the twilight blazed,  
I heeded not the summons: happy time  
It was indeed for all of us; for me  
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud 30  
The village-clock tolled six—I wheeled about,  
Proud and exulting like an untired horse  
That cares not for his home.—All shod with  
steel

We hissed along the polished ice, in games  
Confederate, imitative of the chase  
And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,  
The pack loud-chiming, and the hunted hare.  
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,  
And not a voice was idle: with the din  
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud; 40  
The leafless trees and every icy crag  
Tinkled like iron; while far-distant hills  
Into the tumult sent an alien sound  
Of melancholy, not unnoticed while the stars,  
Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the  
west

The orange sky of evening died away.  
Not seldom from the uproar I retired

## Lines

Into a silent bay, or sportively  
Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,  
To cut across the reflex of a star ; 50  
Image, that, flying still before me, gleamed  
Upon the glassy plain : and oftentimes,  
When we had given our bodies to the wind,  
And all the shadowy banks on either side  
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning  
still

The rapid line of motion, then at once  
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,  
Stopped short ; yet still the solitary cliffs  
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled  
With visible motion her diurnal round ! 60  
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,  
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched  
Till all was tranquil as a summer sea.

1799. 1809.

*William Wordsworth.*

## LINEŠ

NAY, Traveller! rest. This lonely Yew-tree  
stands  
Far from all human dwelling : what if here  
No sparkling rivulet spread the verdant herb?  
What if the bee love not these barren boughs?  
Yet, if the wind breathe soft, the curling waves,  
That break against the shore, shall lull thy mind  
By one soft impulse saved from vacancy.

———Who he was  
That piled these stones and with the mossy sod

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

First covered, and here taught this aged Tree 10  
With its dark arms to form a circling bower,  
I well remember.—He was one who owned  
No common soul. In youth by science nursed,  
And led by nature into a wild scene  
Of lofty hopes, he to the world went forth  
A favoured Being, knowing no desire  
Which genius did not hallow; 'gainst the taint  
Of dissolute tongues, and jealousy, and hate,  
And scorn,—against all enemies prepared,  
All but neglect. The world, for so it thought, 20  
Owed him no service; wherefore he at once  
With indignation turned himself away,  
And with the food of pride sustained his soul  
In solitude.—Stranger! these gloomy boughs  
Had charms for him; and here he loved to sit,  
His only visitants a straggling sheep,  
The stone-chat, or the glancing sand-piper:  
And on these barren rocks, with fern and heath,  
And juniper and thistle, sprinkled o'er,  
Fixing his downcast eye, he many an hour 30  
A morbid pleasure nourished, tracing here  
An emblem of his own unfruitful life:  
And, lifting up his head, he then would gaze  
On the more distant scene,—how lovely 't is  
Thou seest,—and he would gaze till it became  
Far lovelier, and his heart could not sustain  
The beauty, still more beauteous! Nor, that  
time,  
When nature had subdued him to herself,  
Would he forget those Beings to whose minds,  
Warm from the labours of benevolence, 40

## Lines

The world, and human life, appeared a scene  
Of kindred loveliness: then he would sigh,  
Inly disturbed, to think that others felt  
What he must never feel: and so, lost Man!  
On visionary views would fancy feed,  
Till his eye streamed with tears. In this deep  
vale

He died,—this seat his only monument.

If Thou be one whose heart the holy forms  
Of young imagination have kept pure,  
Stranger! henceforth be warned; and know that  
pride, 50

Howe'er disguised in its own majesty,  
Is littleness; that he, who feels contempt  
For any living thing, hath faculties  
Which he has never used; that thought with him  
Is in its infancy. The man whose eye  
Is ever on himself doth look on one,  
The least of Nature's words, one who might  
move

The wise man to that scorn which wisdom holds  
Unlawful, ever. O he wiser, Thou!  
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love; 60  
True dignity abides with him alone  
Who, in the silent hour of inward thought,  
Can still suspect, and still revere himself,  
In lowliness of heart.

1795. 1798.

*William Wordsworth*

## HOME

WHAT is House and what is Home,  
Where with freedom thou hast room,  
And may'st to all tyrants say,  
This you cannot take away?  
'T is no thing with doors and walls,  
Which at every earthquake falls;  
No fair towers, whose princely fashion  
Is but Plunder's invitation;  
No stout marble structure, where  
Walls Eternity do dare;  
No brass gates, no bars of steel,  
Tho' Time's teeth they scorn to feel:  
Brass is not so bold as Pride,  
If on Power's wings it ride;  
Marble 's not so hard as Spite  
Arm'd with lawless Strength and Might.  
Right and just Possession, be  
Potent names, when Laws stand free:  
But if once that rampart fall,  
Stoutest thieves inherit all:  
To be rich and weak 's a sure  
And sufficient forfeiture.

22

Seek no more abroad, say I,  
House and Home, but turn thine eye

## Home

Inward, and observe thy breast ;  
There alone dwells solid Rest.  
That 's a close immured tower  
Which can mock all hostile power.  
To thyself a tenant be,  
And inhabit safe and free.  
Say not that this House is small,  
Girt up in a narrow wall :  
In a cleanly sober mind  
Heaven itself full room doth find.  
Th' Infinite Creator can  
Dwell in it ; and may not Man ?  
Here content make thy abode  
With thyself and with thy God.  
Here in this sweet privacy  
May'st thou with thyself agree,  
And keep House in peace, tho' all  
Th' Universe's fabric fall.  
No disaster can distress thee,  
Nor no Fury dispossess thee :  
Let all war and plunder come,  
Still may'st thou dwell safe at Home. 46

Home is everywhere to thee,  
Who canst thine own dwelling be ;  
Yea, tho' ruthless Death assail thee,  
Still thy lodging will not fail thee :  
Still thy Soul's thine own ; and she  
To an House removed shall be ;  
An eternal House above,  
Wall'd, and roof'd, and paved with  
Love.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

There shall these mud-walls of thine,  
Gallantly repair'd, out-shine  
Mortal Stars;—No Star shall be  
In that Heaven but such as Thee. 58

*c. 1650-60. 1749.*

*Joseph Beaumont.*

## THE CHARACTER OF A HAPPY LIFE

How happy is he born and taught  
That serveth not another's will;  
Whose armour is his honest thought,  
And simple truth his utmost skill; 4

Whose passions not his masters are;  
Whose soul is still prepared for death,  
Untied unto the world by care  
Of public fame or private breath; 8

Who envies none that chance doth raise,  
Nor vice; who never understood  
How deepest wounds are given by praise;  
Nor rules of state, but rules of good; 12

Who hath his life from rumours freed;  
Whose conscience is his strong retreat;  
Whose state can neither flatterers feed,  
Nor ruin make oppressors great; 16

Who God doth late and early pray  
More of His grace than gifts to lend;

## Will

And entertains the harmless day  
With a religious book or friend.

20

This man is freed from servile bands  
Of hope to rise or fear to fall :  
Lord of himself, though not of lands.  
And, having nothing, yet hath all.

24

1614.

*Sir Henry Wotton.*

## WILL

O, WELL for him whose will is strong !  
He suffers, but he will not suffer long :  
He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong :  
For him nor moves the loud world's random  
mock,

Nor all Calamity's hugest waves confound,  
Who seems a promontory of rock,  
That, compass'd round with turbulent sound,  
In middle ocean meets the surging shock,  
Tempest-buffeted, citadel-crown'd.

9

But ill for him who, bettering not with time,  
Corrupts the strength of heaven-descended  
Will,

And ever weaker grows thro' acted crime,  
Or seeming-genial venial fault.  
Recurring and suggesting still !  
He seems as one whose footsteps halt,  
Toiling in immeasurable sand,

## Masterpieces of English Poetry

And o'er a weary sultry land,  
Far beneath a blazing vault,  
Sown in a wrinkle of the monstrous hill,  
The city sparkles like a grain of salt. 20

1855.

*Lord Tennyson.*

### LIFE

LIFE! I know not what thou art,  
But know that thou and I must part;  
And when, or how, or where we met  
I own to me 's a secret yet.  
But this I know, when thou art fled,  
Where'er they lay these limbs, this head,  
No clod so valueless shall be, as all that then  
remains of me.

O whither, whither dost thou fly,  
Where bend unseen thy trackless course,  
And in this strange divorce,  
Ah, tell where I must seek this compound I?

To the vast ocean of empyreal flame,  
From whence thy essence came,  
Dost thou thy flight pursue, when freed  
From matter's base encumbering weed?  
Or dost thou, hid from sight,  
Wait, like some spell-bound knight,  
Through blank, oblivious years the appointed  
hours  
To break thy trance and reassume thy power?  
Yet canst thou, without thought or feeling be?  
O say what art thou, when no more thou 'rt ~~the~~?

## “My Days among the Dead are Past”

Life! we 've been long together  
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;  
'T is hard to part when friends are dear,—  
Perhaps 't will cost a sigh, a tear;  
Then steal away, give little warning.  
Choose thine own time;  
Say not Good Night,—but in some brighter clime  
Bid me Good Morning.

c. 1825.

*Anna Letitia Barbauld.*

## “MY DAYS AMONG THE DEAD ARE PAST”

My days among the Dead are past;  
Around me I behold,  
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,  
The mighty minds of old;  
My never-failing friends are they,  
With whom I converse day by day.

6

With them I take delight in weal.  
And seek relief in woe;  
And, while I understand and feel  
How much to them I owe,  
My cheeks have often been bedew'd  
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

12

My thoughts are with the Dead; with them  
I live in long-past years.  
Their virtues love, their faults condemn,  
Partake their hopes and fears,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And from their lessons seek and find  
Instruction with an humble mind. 18

My hopes are with the Dead ; anon  
My place with them will be,  
And I with them shall travel on  
Through all futurity ;  
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,  
That will not perish in the dust. 24

1818.

*Robert Southey.*

## EACH AND ALL

LITTLE thinks, in the field, yon red-cloaked clown,  
Of thee from the hill-top looking down ;  
The heifer that lows in the upland farm,  
Far-heard, lows not thine ear to charm ;  
The sexton, tolling his bell at noon,  
Deems not that great Napoleon  
Stops his horse, and lists with delight,  
Whilst his files sweep round yon Alpine height ;  
Nor knowest thou what argument  
Thy life to thy neighbor's creed has lent. 10  
All are needed by each one ;  
Nothing is fair or good alone.  
I thought the sparrow's note from heaven,  
Singing at dawn on the alder bough ;  
I brought him home, in his nest, at even ;  
He sings the song, but it cheers not now,  
For I did not bring home the river and sky ;—  
He sang to my ear,—they sang to my eye.  
The delicate shells lay on the shore ;

## Each and All

The bubbles of the latest wave  
Fresh pearls to their enamel gave,  
And the bellowing of the savage sea  
Greeted their safe escape to me.  
I wiped away the weeds and foam,  
I fetched my sea-born treasures home;  
But the poor, unsightly, noisome things  
Had left their beauty on the shore.  
With the sun and the sand and the wild uproar.  
The lover watched his graceful maid,  
As mid the virgin train she strayed.  
Nor knew her beauty's best-attire  
Was woven still by the snow-white choir.  
At last she came to his hermitage,  
Like the bird from the woodlands to the cage;—  
The gay enchantment was undone,  
A gentle wife, but fairy none.  
Then I said, "I covet truth;  
Beauty is unripe childhood's cheat;  
I leave it behind with the games of youth:"—  
As I spoke, beneath my feet  
The ground-pine curled its pretty wreath,  
Running over the club-moss burrs;  
I inhaled the violet's breath;  
Around me stood the oaks and firs;  
Pine-cones and acorns lay on the ground;  
Over me soared the eternal sky,  
Full of light and of deity;  
Again I saw, again I heard,  
The rolling river, the morning bird;—  
Beauty through my senses stole:  
I yielded myself to the perfect whole.

1847.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

## YOUTH AND AGE

VERSE, a breeze mid blossoms straying,  
Where Hope clung feeding, like a bee—  
Both were mine! Life went a-maying  
With Nature, Hope, and Poesy.

When I was young!

*When* I was young?—Ah, woeful *When*!  
Ah! for the change 'twixt *Now* and *Then*!  
This breathing house not built with hands,  
This body that does me grievous wrong,  
O'er aery cliffs and glittering sands, 10  
How lightly *then* it flashed along:—  
Like those trim skiffs, unknown of yore,  
On winding lakes and rivers wide,  
That ask no aid of sail or oar,  
That fear no spite of wind or tide!  
Nought cared this body for 'wind or weather  
When Youth and I lived in 't together.  
Flowers are lovely; Love is flower-like;  
Friendship is a sheltering tree;  
O! the joys, that came down shower-like, 20  
Of Friendship, Love, and Liberty,

Ere I was old!

*Ere* I was old? Ah, woeful *Ere*,  
Which tells me, Youth 's no longer here!  
O Youth! for years so many and sweet,

## The Forerunners

'T is known, that Thou and I were one,  
I 'll think it but a fond conceit—  
It cannot be that Thou art gone!  
Thy vesper-bell hath not yet toll'd:—  
And thou wert aye a masker bold! 30  
What strange disguise hast now put on,  
To *make believe*, that thou art gone?  
I see these locks in silvery slips,  
This drooping gait, this altered size:  
But Spring-tide blossoms on thy lips,  
And tears take sunshine from thine eyes!  
Life is but thought: so think I will  
That Youth and I are house-mates still.  
Dew-drops are the gems of morning.  
But the tears of mournful eve! 40  
Where no hope is, life 's a warning  
That only serves to make us grieve,  
When we are old:  
That only serves to make us grieve  
With oft and tedious taking-leave  
Like some poor nigh-related guest,  
That may not rudely be dismiss;  
Yet hath out-stay'd his welcome while,  
And tells the jest without the smile. 49

1823. 1828. 1832.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

## THE FORERUNNERS

LONG I followed happy guides.  
I could never reach their sides:  
Their step is forth, and, ere the day,  
Breaks up their leaguer, and away.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Keen my sense, my heart was young,  
Right good-will my sinews strung,  
But no speed of mine avails  
To hunt upon their shining trails.  
On and away, their hasting feet  
Make the morning proud and sweet;      20  
Flowers they strew,—I catch the scent;  
Or tone of silver instrument  
Leaves on the wind melodious trace;  
Yet I could never see their face.  
On eastern hills I see their smokes,  
Mixed with mist by distant lochs.  
I met many travellers  
Who the road had surely kept;  
They saw not my fine revellers,—  
These had crossed them while they slept,      20  
Some had heard their fair report,  
In the country or the court.  
Fleetest couriers alive  
Never yet could once arrive,  
As they went or they returned,  
At the house where these sojourned.  
Sometimes their strong speed they slacken,  
Though they are not overtaken;  
In sleep their jubilant troop is near,—  
I tuneful voices overhear;      30  
It may be in wood or waste,—  
At unawares 't is come and passed.  
Their near camp my spirit knows  
By signs gracious as rainbows.  
I thenceforward and long after,  
Listen for their harp-like laughter,

## Terminus

And carry in my heart, for days,  
Peace that hallows rudest ways.

1847.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

## TERMINUS

It is time to be old,  
To take in sail:—  
The god of bounds,  
Who sets to seas a shore,  
Came to me in his fatal rounds,  
And said: "No more!  
No farther shoot  
Thy broad ambitious branches, and thy  
root.

Fancy departs: no more invent;  
Contract thy firmament 10  
To compass of a tent.  
There 's not enough for this and that,  
Make thy option which of two;  
Economize the failing river,  
Not the less revere the Giver,  
Leave the many and hold the few.  
Timely wise accept the terms,  
Soften the fall with wary foot;  
A little while  
Still plan and smile, 20  
And,—fault of novel germs,—  
Mature the unfallen fruit.  
Curse, if thou wilt, thy sires,  
Bad husbands of their fires,

## Masterpieces of English Poetry


Who, when they gave thee breath,  
Failed to bequeath  
The needful sinew stark as once,  
The Baresark marrow to thy bones,  
But left a legacy of ebbing veins,  
Inconstant heat and nerveless reins;      30  
Amid the Muses, left thee deaf and dumb,  
Amid the gladiators, halt and numb."

As the bird trims her to the gale,  
I trim myself to the storm of time,  
I man the rudder, reef the sail,  
Obey the voice at eve obeyed at prime:  
"Lowly faithful, banish fear,      "  
Right onward drive unharmed;  
The port, well worth the cruise, is near,  
And every wave is charmed."      40

1867.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

## THE PROBLEM

I LIKE a church; I like a cowl;  
I love a prophet of the soul;   
And on my heart monastic aisles  
Fall like sweet strains or pensive smiles:  
Yet not for all his faith can see  
Would I that cowlèd churchman be.  
Why should the vest on him allure,  
Which I could not on me endure?

## The Problem

Not from a vain or shallow thought  
His awful Jove young Phidias brought;   10  
Never from lips of cunning fell  
The thrilling Delphic oracle;  
Out from the heart of nature rolled  
The burdens of the Bible old;  
The litanies of nations came,  
Like the volcano's tongue of flame,  
Up from the burning core below,—  
The canticles of love and woe:  
The hand that rounded Peter's dome,  
And groined the aisles of Christian Rome,   20  
Wrought in a sad sincerity;  
Himself from God he could not free;  
He builded better than he knew;—  
The conscious stone to beauty grew.

Know'st thou what wove yon woodbird's  
    nest  
Of leaves, and feathers from her breast?  
Or how the fish outbuilt her shell,  
Painting with morn each annual cell?  
Or how the sacred pine-tree adds  
To her old leaves new myriads?   30  
Such and so grew these holy piles,  
Whilst love and terror laid the tiles.  
Earth proudly wears the Parthenon,  
As the best gem upon her zone;  
And Morning opes with haste her lids,  
To gaze upon the Pyramids;  
O'er England's abbeys bends the sky,  
As on its friends, with kindred eye;

## Masterpieces of English Poetry

For, out of Thought's interior sphere,  
These wonders rose to upper air; 40  
And Nature gladly gave them place,  
Adopted them into her race,  
And granted them an equal date  
With Andes and with Ararat.

These temples grew as grows the grass;  
Art might obey, but not surpass.  
The passive Master lent his hand  
To the vast Soul that o'er him planned;  
And the same power that reared the  
shrine  
Bestrode the tribes that knelt within. 50  
Ever the fiery Pentecost  
Girds with one flame the countless host,  
Trances the heart through chanting choirs,  
And through the priest the mind inspires.  
The word unto the prophet spoken  
Was writ on tables yet unbroken;  
The word by seers or sibyls told,  
In groves of oak, or fanes of gold,  
Still floats upon the morning wind,  
Still whispers to the willing mind. 60  
One accent of the Holy Ghost  
The heedless world hath never lost.  
I know what say the fathers wise,—  
The Book itself before me lies,  
Old *Chrysostom*, best *Augustine*,  
And he who blent both in his line,  
The younger *Golden Lips* or mines,  
Taylor, the Shakespeare of divines.

## Brahma

His words are music in my ear,  
I see his cowlèd portrait dear; 70  
And yet, for all his faith could see,  
I would not the good bishop be.

1840.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

## BRAHMA

If the red slayer think he slays,  
Or if the slain think he is slain,  
They know not well the subtle ways  
I keep, and pass, and turn again. 4

Far or forgot to me is near;  
Shadow and sunlight are the same;  
The vanished gods to me appear;  
And one to me are shame and fame. 8

They reckon ill who leave me out;  
When me they fly, I am the wings;  
I am the doubter and the doubt,  
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings. 12

The strong gods pine for my abode,  
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;  
But thou, meek lover of the good!  
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven. 16

1858.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

## IN A LECTURE-ROOM

AWAY, haunt thou not me,  
Thou vain Philosophy!  
Little hast thou bestead,  
Save to perplex the head,  
And leave the spirit dead.  
Unto thy broken cisterns wherefore go,  
While from the secret treasure-depths  
below,  
Fed by the skiey shower,  
And clouds that sink and rest on hill-  
tops high,  
Wisdom at once, and Power, 10  
Are welling, bubbling forth, unseen, in-  
cessantly?  
Why labour at the dull mechanic oar,  
When the fresh breeze is blowing,  
And the strong current flowing,  
Right onward to the Eternal Shore?

1840. 1849.

*Arthur Hugh Clough.*

## “ SAY NOT THE STRUGGLE NOUGHT AVAILETH ”

SAY not the struggle nought availeth,  
The labour and the wounds are vain,  
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,  
And as things have been they remain. 4

## Self-dependence

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;  
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,  
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,  
And, but for you, possess the field. \* 8

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,  
Comes silent, flooding in, the main. 12

And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light,  
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,  
But westward, look, the land is bright. 16

1849. 1862.

*Arthur Hugh Clough.*

## SELF-DEPENDENCE

WEARY of myself, and sick of asking  
What I am, and what I ought to be,  
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me  
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea. 4

And a look of passionate desire  
O'er the sea and to the stars I send:  
"Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd  
me,  
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end! 8

"Ah, once more," I cried, "ye stars, ye waters,  
On my heart your mighty charm renew;

## Masterpieces of English Poetry

Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,  
Feel my soul becoming vast like you!" 12

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of  
heaven,  
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,  
In the rustling night-air came the answer:  
"Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *Live* as they. 16

"Unaffrighted by the silence round them,  
Undistracted by the sights they see,  
These demand not that the things without them  
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy. 20

"And with joy the stars perform their  
shining,  
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll;  
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting  
All the fever of some differing soul. 24

"Bounded by themselves, and unregardful  
In what state God's other works may be,  
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,  
These attain the mighty life you see." 28

O air-born voice! long since, severely clear,  
A cry like thine in mine own heart I hear:  
"Resolve to be thyself; and know that he,  
Who finds himself, loses his misery!" 32

1852.

Matthew Arnold.

## THE FUTURE

A WANDERER is man from his birth.  
He was born in a ship  
On the breast of the river of Time;  
Brimming with wonder and joy  
He spreads out his arms to the light,  
Rivets his gaze on the banks of the stream.

As what he sees is, so have his thoughts been,  
Whether he wakes  
Where the snowy mountainous pass,  
Echoing the screams of the eagles, 10  
Hems in its gorges the bed  
Of the new-born clear-flowing stream;  
Whether he first sees light  
Where the river in gleaming fings  
Sluggishly winds through the plain;  
Whether in sound of the swallowing sea—  
As is the world on the banks,  
So is the mind of the man.

Vainly does each, as he glides,  
Fable and dream 20  
Of the lands which the river of Time  
Had left ere he woke on its breast,  
Or shall reach when his eyes have been closed.  
Only the tract where he sails

## Masterpieces of English Poetry

~~He wots of~~; only the thoughts.  
Raised by the objects he passes, are his.

Who can see the green earth any more  
As she was by the sources of Time?  
Who imagines her fields as they lay  
In the sunshine, unworn by the plough? 30  
Who thinks as they thought,  
The tribes who then roam'd on her breast.  
Her vigorous primitive sons?  
What girl  
Now reads in her bosom as clear  
As Rebekah read, when she sate  
At eve by the palm-shaded well?  
Who guards in her breast  
As deep, as pellucid a spring  
Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure? 40

What bard,  
At the height of his vision, can deem  
Of God, of the world, of the soul,  
With a plainness as near,  
As flashing as Moses felt  
When he lay in the night by his flock  
On the starlit Arabian waste?  
Can rise and obey  
The beck of the Spirit like him?

This tract which the river of Time 50  
Now flows through with us, is the plain.  
Gone is the calm of its earlier shore.  
Border'd by cities and hoarse

## The Future

With a thousand cries is its stream.  
And we on its breast, our minds  
Are confused as the cries which we hear,  
Changing and shot as the sights which we see.

And we say that repose has fled  
For ever the course of the river of Time.  
That cities will crowd to its edge 60  
In a blacker, incessanter line;  
That the din will be more on its banks,  
Denser the trade on its stream.  
Flatter the plain where it flows,  
Fiercer the sun overhead.  
That never will those on its breast  
See an ennobling sight,  
Drink of the feeling of quiet again.

But what was before us we know not.  
And we know not what shall succeed. 70

Haply, the river of Time—  
As it grows, as the towns on its marge  
Fling their wavering lights  
On a wider, statelier stream—  
May acquire, if not the calm  
Of its early mountainous shore,  
Yet a solemn peace of its own.

And the width of the waters, the hush  
Of the gray expanse where he floats,  
Freshening its current and spotted with foam 80  
As it draws to the Ocean, may strike

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Peace to the soul of the man on its breast—  
As the pale waste widens around him,  
As the banks fade dimmer away,  
As the stars come out, and the night-wind  
Brings up the stream  
Murmurs and scents of the infinite sea.

1852.

*Matthew Arnold.*

### PALLADIUM

Set where the upper streams of Simois flow  
Was the Palladium, high 'mid rock and wood;  
And Hector was in Ilium, far below,  
And fought, and saw it not—but there it stood! 4

It stood, and sun and moonshine rain'd their  
light  
On the pure columns of its glen-built hall.  
Backward and forward roll'd the waves of fight  
Round Troy—but while this stood, Troy could  
not fall. 8

So, in its lovely moonlight, lives the soul.  
Mountains surround it and sweet virgin air;  
Cold plashing, past it, crystal waters roll;  
We visit it by moments, ah, too rare! 12

We shall renew the battle in the plain  
To-morrow: red with blood will Xanthus be;  
Hector and Ajax will be there again,  
Helen will come upon the wall to see. 16

## Dover Beach

Then we shall rust in shade, or shine in strife,  
And fluctuate 'twixt blind hopes and blind  
    despairs,  
And fancy that we put forth all our life,  
And never know how with the soul it fares.     20

Still doth the soul, from its long fastness high,  
Upon our life a ruling effluence send  
And when it fails, fight as we will, we die;  
And while it lasts, we cannot wholly end.     24

1867.

*Matthew Arnold*

## DOVER BEACH

THE sea is calm to-night.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits;—on the French coast the  
    light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England  
    stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!  
Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,  
Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and  
    fling,     10  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea. 20

The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's  
    shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.  
Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems 30  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and  
    flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

1867.

*Matthew Arnold.*

## GROWING OLD

WHAT is it to grow old?  
Is it to lose the glory of the form,  
The lustre of the eye?  
Is it for beauty to forego her wreath?  
—Yes, but not this alone. 5

Is it to feel our strength—  
Not our bloom only, but our strength—  
decay?  
Is it to feel each limb  
Grow stiffer, every function less exact.  
Each nerve more loosely strung? 10

Yes, this, and more; but not—  
Ah, 't is not what in youth we dream'd  
't would be!  
'T is not to have our life  
Mellow'd and soften'd as with sunset glow,  
A golden day's decline. 15

'T is not to see the world  
As from a height, with rapt prophetic eyes,  
And heart profoundly stirr'd;  
And weep, and feel the fulness of the past,  
The years that are no more. 20

## "Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

It is to spend long days  
And not once feel that we were ever young;  
It is to add, immured  
In the hot prison of the present, month  
To month with weary pain. 25

It is to suffer this,  
And feel but half, and feebly, what we feel.  
Deep in our hidden heart  
Festers the dull remembrance of a change,  
But no emotion—none. 30

It is—last stage of all—  
When we are frozen up within, and quite  
The phantom of ourselves,  
To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost  
Which blamed the living man. 35

1867.

*Matthew Arnold.*

## WHAT RABBI JEHOSSA SAID

RABBI JEHOSSA used to say  
That God made angels every day,  
Perfect as Michael and the rest  
First brooded in creation's nest,  
Whose only office was to cry  
*Hosanna!* once, and then to die;  
Or rather, with Life's essence blent,  
To be led home from banishment.

## The End of the Play

Rabbi Jehosha had the skill  
To know that Heaven is in God's will; 10  
And doing that, though for a space  
One heart-beat long, may win a grace  
As full of grandeur and of glow  
As Princes of the Chariot know.

'T were glorious, no doubt, to be  
One of the strong-winged Hierarchy,  
To burn with Seraphs, or to shine  
With Cherubs, deathlessly divine;  
Yet I, perhaps, poor earthly clod, 20  
Could I forget myself in God,  
Could I but find my nature's clew  
Simply as birds and blossoms do,  
And but for one rapt moment know  
'T is Heaven must come, not we must go,  
Should win my place as near the throne  
As the pearl-angel of its zone,  
And God would listen mid the throng  
For my one breath of perfect song,  
That, in its simple human way,  
Said all the Host of Heaven could say. 30

1868.

*James Russell Lowell.*

## THE END OF THE PLAY

THE play is done; the curtain drops,  
Slow falling to the prompter's bell;  
A moment yet the actor stops.  
And looks around, to say farewell.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

It is an irksome word and task ;  
And, when he 's laughed and said his say,  
He shows, as he removes the mask,  
A face that 's anything but gay. 18

One word, ere yet the evening ends,  
Let 's close it with a parting rhyme,  
And pledge a hand to all young friends,  
As fits the merry Christmas time.  
On life's wide scene you, too, have parts,  
That fate erelong shall bid you play ;  
Good night ! with honest gentle hearts  
A kindly greeting go away ! 16

Good night !—I 'd say, the griefs, the joys,  
Just hinted in this mimic page,  
The triumphs and defeats of boys,  
Are but repeated in our age.  
I 'd say, your woes were not less keen,  
Your hopes more vain, than those of men ;  
Your pangs or pleasures of fifteen  
At forty-five played o'er again. 24

I 'd say, we suffer and we strive,  
Not less nor more as men than boys ;  
With grizzled beards at forty-five,  
As erst at twelve in corduroys.  
And if, in time of sacred youth,  
We learned at home to love and pray,  
Pray Heaven that early Love and Truth  
May never wholly pass away. 32

## **The End of the Play"**

And in the world, as in the school,  
I 'd say, how fate may change and shift;  
The prize be sometimes with the fool,  
The race not always to the swift.  
The strong may yield, the good may fall,  
The great man be a vulgar clown,  
The knave be lifted over all,  
The kind cast pitilessly down. 40

Who knows the inscrutable design?  
Blessèd be He who took and gave!  
Why should your mother, Charles, not mine,  
Be weeping at her darling's grave?  
We bow to Heaven that will'd it so,  
That darkly rules the fate of all,  
That sends the respite or the blow,  
That 's free to give, or to recall. 48

This crown his feast with wine and wit:  
Who brought him to that mirth and state?  
His betters, see, below him sit,  
Or hunger hopeless at the gate.  
Who bade the mud from Dives' wheel  
To spurn the rags of Lazarus?  
Come, brother, in that dust we 'll kneel,  
Confessing Heaven that ruled it thus. 56

So each shall mourn, in life's advance,  
Dear hopes, dear friends, untimely killed;  
Shall grieve for many a forfeit chance,  
And longing passion unfulfilled.

## Masterpieces of English Poetry

Amen! whatever fate be sent,

Pray God the heart may kindly glow,  
Although the head with cares be bent,  
And whitened with the winter snow. 64

Come wealth or want, come good or ill,

Let young and old accept their part,  
And bow before the Awful Will,

And bear it with an honest heart,  
Who misses or who wins the prize.

Go, lose or conquer as you can;

But if you fail, or if you rise,

Be each, pray God, a gentleman. 72

A gentleman, or old or young!

(Bear kindly with my humble lays);

The sacred chorus first was sung

Upon the first of Christmas days:

The shepherds heard it overhead—

The joyful angels raised it then:

Glory to Heaven on high, it said,

And peace on earth to gentle men!

My song, save this, is little worth;

I lay the weary pen aside,

And wish you health, and love, and mirth,

As fits the solemn Christmastide.

As fits the holy Christmas birth,

Be this, good friends, our carol still—

Be peace on earth, be peace on earth,

To men of gentle will. 88

1848-9.

*William Makepeace Thackeray.*





